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**The Pace Setter Houses: Livable Modernism in Postwar America**

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# The Pace Setter Houses: Livable Modernism in Postwar America

by

Monica Michelle Penick, B.A., M.S.

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2007

UMI Number:

**Acknowledgements**

Six years ago, as I finished my final semester as a Master's student, my advisor Anthony Alofsin suggested that I investigate a little-known architect named Alfred Browning Parker. Neither of us really knew who he was, or of his links to *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House Program or to *House Beautiful* editor-in-chief Elizabeth Gordon. I am sure neither of us expected that Parker would inspire the beginnings of this dissertation. I owe Dr. Alofsin many thanks for this initial suggestion. I have benefited tremendously from his support, guidance, and critical feedback over the course of this project. I am grateful, too, for the suggestions and insight of my committee: Richard Cleary, Christopher Long, Richard Longstreth, and Danilo Udovicki-Selb. Dr. Long, in particular, has always provided a sounding board and encouragement.

Researching Elizabeth Gordon and the eleven Pace Setter architects proved to be a demanding quest. My search led me to eleven repositories across the United States, and I am grateful for the assistance of the many librarians, archivists and curators who have aided my endeavor: Indira Berndtson and Margo Stipe at the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives; Nancy Hadley at the A.I.A. Archives; Kurt Helfrich at the Architectural Design Collection at the University of California at Santa Barbara; Mark Henderson at the Special Collections and Visual Resources Getty Research Library (Frank Lloyd Wright Correspondence); Kathy Lafferty and Karen Cook at the Spencer Research Library; John Nemmers at the Smathers Library at the University of Florida in Gainesville; and

particularly to Jennie Watts and Erin Chase at the Huntington, who made the Maynard Parker Collection available to me before its catalog was complete. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Beth Dodd and Nancy Sparrow at the Alexander Archives at the University of Texas at Austin, and their generous colleagues at the Architecture Library, Janine Henri and Dan Orozco.

I benefited from a number of personal interviews and tours of the extant Pace Setter houses. My most sincere gratitude goes to Alfred Browning Parker, for his many interviews both over the phone and in person, and for his willingness to connect me to current and past owners of his four Pace Setter houses. His perspective, particularly with regard to Elizabeth Gordon, has been invaluable. I had the good fortune to interview David Barrow, Jr., who worked with Harwell Harris on the Pace Setter 1955; Stanley Cohen, who built the Pace Setter 1960; Cornelia Brierly, who knew John deKoven Hill perhaps better than anyone; Hugh Halff, Jr., the original owner of the Pace Setter 1961; and Carol Morse, the current owner of the Pace Setter 1951. My thanks for those who have guided my visits: Patricia Corbett, who allowed me to tour her Pace Setter 1960; Walter Langsam and Stewart Maxwell, in Cincinnati; and Alfred Browning Parker in Florida.

For their many engaging conversations, thanks to Edward Bosley of the Gamble House; Ashley Calahan, who shared her research on textile artist Mariska Karasz; Holly du Rivage, who grew up in an Alfred Browning Parker house; and Randolph Henning, who graciously shared his personal materials relating to Alfred Browning Parker.

I have presented my dissertation research in several public forums over the last two years, and I am grateful for the feedback given by colleagues and audience members on these occasions. The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture's symposium "Sanctioning Modernism," (March 2007) provided the opportunity for me to present my work on Elizabeth Gordon and the American Style. I thank Dean Fritz Steiner for funding the endeavor, Vladimir Kulić and Timothy Parker for sharing the organizational duties with me, my fellow participants Sandy Isenstadt and Gwendolyn Wright for their insights on my work, and my respondent Christopher Long for his comments. My inclusion in Columbia University's 2007 Buell Dissertation Colloquium allowed me to further develop my research on Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America," and the fate of organic architecture. Many thanks to Joan Ockman and Mary McLeod for their support, and to my session chair Dell Upton for his critical comments.

My research over the last six years has required extensive travel and substantial financial support. I offer sincere thanks to the University of Texas at Austin for three years of fellowship funding. I am particularly grateful for the continued support of the School of Architecture: I have received generous travel grants from the Robert E. Veselka Endowed Fellowship in 2005 and 2007, and other scholarship support through the Jean Shepherd Houlihan Scholarship (2002-03) and the Natalie Deblois Scholarship (2003-04). The Beverly Willis Foundation provided a fellowship in 2005 that both enabled further study of Elizabeth Gordon, and secured my membership in the BWAF Fellow's forum that has inspired much of my thinking on women in the architectural

professions. I am indebted to the colleagues that I have met through the BWAF, not the least of which are Beverly Willis, Wanda Bubriski, Lian Hurst Mann, Gabrielle Esperdy, and Gwendolyn Wright. My final year of dissertation writing was funded by a year-long American Fellowship from the American Association of University Women; I am grateful for their financial support and the network they have created.

The University of Texas has provided me with three of the best colleagues anyone could hope for: Kate Holliday, Vladimir Kulić, and Timothy Parker. Not only have these three created a dynamic intellectual environment, but have imparted a sense of collegiality that will follow me throughout my career. Over the last six years, their collaborations, support and friendship have made this journey all the more enjoyable. My gratitude for Kate's sharp editorial pen and quick wit, Vladimir's stimulating conversation, and Timothy's patient ear.

In Austin and beyond, I thank my family, friends and various athletic training partners for years of good humor and healthy perspective. My parents, who first inspired my interest in architecture, have lent their unwavering support. But most of all, I would like to thank my partner of the last dozen years, Andrew Maag. Without his humor, patience, and tolerance for take-out, this endeavor would not have been possible.

The Pace Setter Houses: Livable Modernism in Postwar America

*Publication no.* _____

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2007

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In 1946, *House Beautiful*'s editor-in-chief Elizabeth Gordon launched the Pace Setter House Program, an annual series of exhibition houses that proposed a new modern architecture for postwar America. Set in direct opposition to *Arts & Architecture's* Case Study Houses, the Pace Setter houses criticized orthodox modernism, and offered a "livable" and distinctly American alternative. Organic design, particularly the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, further informed this new concept of American modernism, adding a rich layer of humanism, naturalism, and democratic idealism. Rejecting the Case Study prototype of universal solutions and prefabrication, the Pace Setter houses advocated a solution in which the craft of building guaranteed regional variation, artistic quality and individual expression. *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter Program, with its implicit organic roots, underscored one of the most charged architectural debates of the postwar period:

the renewed tension between the specific and the general, the regional and the international, the individual and the collective. With the establishment of the Pace Setter House Program, Gordon developed a mature paradigm for the postwar house – and simultaneously created a dynamic public forum for architectural debate. With the Pace Setters as counterpoint, she lashed out against the architectural current to attack what she viewed as the greatest threat to American design: the unlivable, autocratic, and foreign modernism of the International Style. Gordon's role in the larger architectural debate was critical, not only in her vociferous opposition to what she viewed as a blind continuation of an oppressive modernist lineage, but in her stalwart support of alternative design tropes. The Pace Setter Houses and their architects – ranging from Cliff May to Alfred Browning Parker to Harwell Harris – represented one battlefield in the aesthetic and philosophical struggle between the emerging modernisms of the postwar period. Accompanied by Gordon's insistent voice and publications, the Pace Setters became ammunition in an architectural revolution that, for *House Beautiful*, lasted nearly twenty years. The Pace Setters chronicled the emergence of a vital strand of American modernism, and provided a lens through which to view the ultimate integration and acceptance of modernism within the mainstream of middle-class America.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The Pace Setter House Program, launched by *House Beautiful*'s editor-in-chief Elizabeth Gordon in 1946, proposed an alternative modern architecture for postwar America. Set in direct opposition to *Arts & Architecture's* Case Study House Program, launched in 1945, the Pace Setter Program re-framed domestic modernism through a series of vignettes: seventeen exhibition houses constructed across the United States (Fig. 1.1, 1.2). As a model for modern residential design, the Pace Setter Houses criticized the functionalism implicit in the Case Studies, and offered what *House Beautiful* viewed as a more "livable" alternative. These competing programs, both poised to reform domestic architecture for an emerging middle-class consumer group, underscored one of the most charged architectural debates in postwar America: the renewed tension between the specific and the general, the regional and the international, the individual and the collective. Rejecting the Case Study prototype of universal solutions and prefabrication, the Pace Setter Houses advocated a solution in which the craft of building guaranteed climatic response, regional variation, artistic quality and individual expression.

With these concerns, the Pace Setter Houses emphasized what *House Beautiful* defined as a humanistic and organic approach to modern design, from Cliff May's California ranch houses, to David D. Bohannon's modest tract homes, to Alfred Browning Parker's organic *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Fig. 1.3). Each Pace Setter House altered the public perception of "modern" architecture, expanding both conceptual and aesthetic

visions. Individually, each Pace Setter House responded to architectural issues at a given moment in a particular location; collectively, the Pace Setters provided a practical and philosophical framework within which to address broad architectural concerns. The geographical range, stylistic diversity, and temporal longevity of the Pace Setter program only served to strengthen the vitality of this response to the postwar housing crisis. The Pace Setter Houses continued an embedded tradition of American design based on the search for the particular. The challenge for the Pace Setters, then, was to translate this approach on a mass scale.

Within America's larger cultural discourse, the Pace Setter House Program presented only one solution to problem of the postwar house. Yet the program had broad implications. The Pace Setter Houses raised fundamental questions about both formal and aesthetic choices, and about what architecture was asked to do: provide a means by which Americans in a complex postwar world could begin to express and identify themselves. In more specific architectural terms, the Pace Setter Houses demonstrated the ways in which American designers, critics, and taste-makers struggled to come to terms with the legacy of European functionalism of the 1920s and 1930s. By softening the hard-edged lines of interwar avant-garde architecture, and by incorporating elements of a "native" American modernism, many postwar designers – with Elizabeth Gordon at their lead – hoped to combat a reduction of postwar modern housing to Corbusian "machines for living." The Pace Setter Houses revealed an ongoing internal critique of modern design

and a new expressive solution to what many had prematurely dismissed as the "solved" problem of the postwar modern house.[1]

At the close of World War II, *House Beautiful* and Gordon recognized that the problem of the postwar house was far from resolved. By launching the ambitious Pace Setter House program as a series of annual exhibition houses, Gordon kept the issue in the forefront of architectural discourse. She not only stimulated debate within the profession, but she encouraged participation from the consumers of modern design. For this later audience in particular, Gordon positioned the Pace Setter Houses as serious competition for other strands of modern design. Though she advocated an architecture based on common sense and practicality, she rejected any notion that houses of this kind would represent mere "building" rather than architecture. If many of the Pace Setter Houses displayed a strong organic undercurrent, Gordon refused their reduction to a "woodsy," romantic Cottage Style, as Alfred Barr, Jr. of the Museum of Modern Art, implied in 1948.[2]

The Pace Setter architects offered the design solutions, but Gordon remained the driving force behind the program (Fig. 1.4). With the aid of her staff, including decorators, architects, and photographers, she discovered and presented some of the most compelling examples of domestic architecture in the postwar period. In many ways, this dissertation is the story of Elizabeth Gordon and her impact on postwar housing. From her post at *House Beautiful*, she offered informed criticism of contemporary domestic architecture from the perspective of the consumer. She was certainly not impartial, but

her views formed a vital component of the postwar architectural discourse. With her fervent opposition to orthodox modernism, she forced her view of livable, organic architecture into the forefront of the American imagination. This not only opened a venue for the popularization of a new kind of architecture, but created a framework for the re-formation of American modern character (architectural, social and cultural). Over the course of her career, she defined investigative journalism for the architecture market; her activist editing represents one of the most comprehensive and synthetic accounts of alternative modernism in the postwar period. Through the creation of the Pace Setter Houses and other exhibition environments, *House Beautiful*, unlike many competing shelter magazines, became intimately involved in the design, decoration and production of the postwar domestic environment.

Though she remains the primary protagonist in the narrative that follows, Gordon was clearly influenced by the Pace Setter architects, as well as by Frank Lloyd Wright, Bruno Zevi, Lewis Mumford, and her staff. Members of her *House Beautiful* staff were, in particular, a constant resource. James Marston Fitch, Joseph A. Barry, Jean Murray Bangs (Mrs. Harwell Harris), and Curtis Besinger helped Gordon shape the editorial message; others, such as interior designers Laura Tanner and, after 1953, John deKoven Hill, influenced the magazine's creative direction. This group of professionals rallied around the Pace Setter Houses, and with Gordon, enabled the larger phenomenon of architectural popularization.

Even with Gordon's decisive role in the story, this dissertation is more than an account of one shelter magazine's promotional program and one editor's aesthetic or philosophical predilections. The Pace Setter Houses and their architects, as documented by Elizabeth Gordon in the pages of *House Beautiful*, represent one battlefield in the aesthetic and philosophical struggle between the emerging modernisms of the postwar period. This group of houses refines our understanding of domestic architecture; they provide an enriched narrative of aesthetic debates, philosophical struggles, nationalistic assertions, and cultural declarations of independence. Accompanied by Gordon's propagandized text, the Pace Setters became ammunition in an architectural revolution that, for *House Beautiful*, would last nearly twenty years. The Pace Setters chronicled the reemergence of a vital strand of American modernism, providing a lens through which to view the ultimate integration and acceptance of modernism within the mainstream of middle-class America to the larger end of forging a new basis for national architectural identity.

**Historiography and Research Methods**

My understanding of the postwar decades has been significantly informed by a wide variety of source materials. Government documents, socio-cultural commentaries, and popular fiction provided me with a general sense of the cultural milieu. A study of postwar culture and the rise of the architectural consumer would not be complete without

a look at David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), Lyman Bryson's *Which Way America* (1939) and *The Next America* (1952), and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In more recent scholarship, Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1985) and "The United States, 1941-1963" in *Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age* (2001) provided critical insight into this period, with Boyer's benefit of historical distance.

As these cultural studies formed the contextual framework of my research, contemporary architectural writings illuminated specific issues that concerned designers, critics, and consumers during the two decades that followed World War II. A group of selected texts were of immense importance to my study: Bruno Zevi's *Towards an Organic Architecture* (1950); Siegfried Gideon's *Architecture You and Me: The Diary of a Development* (1958); James Marston Fitch's *Architecture and the Esthetics of Plenty* (1961); Cliff May's *Western Ranch Houses* (1946); Edward Paxton's edited volume of housing research, *What People Want When They Buy a House* (1955); and Frank Lloyd Wright's many essays, particularly "The Language of Organic Architecture" (1953). Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer's five-volume edition of *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings* was of tremendous value, not only for ease of use, but for the additional context that Pfeiffer provided.

A great deal has been written about postwar history and the impact of the Cold War on American culture, yet most broad architectural accounts have neglected the postwar period. This is due in part to a lack of critical distance from the events and

buildings under consideration. Postwar housing in particular has been treated in a general and brief manner, with a great deal of emphasis on either iconic custom homes or suburban developments. Few studies have attempted to explain the substantial shifts in theory and form that occurred over such a short period; even fewer studies have addressed postwar efforts to decrease the distance between mass housing and high-style architecture. The role of mainstream modern architecture as a means to fulfill individual needs and as the source of a new American identity (beyond the American Dream), has been entirely neglected.

Most surveys of American architecture oversimplify the complexities of postwar domestic design, but Gwendolyn Wright's *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (1981) and Clifford Clark's *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (1986) are notable exceptions. Both outline the broad social context of postwar housing, though they provide little detail about the architectural designs themselves. Mark Gelernter's *History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context* (1999) and Dennis P. Doordan's *Twentieth-Century Architecture* (2002) provide more in the way of illustrative material.[3] Both address the building in the 1940s and 1950s in a substantive way that frames the larger architectural context for the Pace Setter program. The vast majority of the remaining texts on postwar housing deal specifically with high style architecture, individual practitioners, or architecture found in specific geographic regions. For example, the Case Study House Program, a series of Los Angeles projects sponsored by John Entenza and *Arts & Architecture*, has received

considerable attention. Esther McCoy's *Case Study Houses 1945-1962* (1977) and Elizabeth A.T. Smith's *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (1989) both offer comprehensive treatment of this influential program.[4] Although McCoy was the first to compile the history of the Case Study Houses, her work is less contextual and less interpretative than Smith's *Blueprints for Modern Living*. Smith's volume includes an exhaustive catalog of all thirty-six Case Study projects, and a number of valuable essays that provide cultural and historical context for the program. Within Smith's group of essays, the most relevant to this dissertation is Thomas Hine's essay "The Search for the Postwar House." Here, Hine links the popularity of functionalist architecture (as he describes the Case Study Houses) with "the search for modern architecture" launched by period shelter magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and *House Beautiful*. With its focus on Southern California, Hine's essay provides a good overview of various attempts to address the problem of the postwar house, yet still leaves room for the exploration of the many solutions posed beyond of the realm of high modernism.[5]

Two unpublished doctoral dissertations further illuminate the development of the postwar house, particularly as it relates to creation of modern architecture for the middle class. Both Christopher T. Martin's "Tract-House Modern: A Study of Housing completed and Consumption in the Washington Suburbs, 1946-1960" and Matthew A. Postal's 'Toward a Democratic Esthestic?': The Modern House in America 1932-1955" provide case studies of the postwar home and link these to the broad context of modern

design.[6] While both Martin and Postal help to shatter the myth of monolithic modernism, both focus on examples from the eastern United States that miss the significant developments – indeed the shift of architectural influence – in the American West. Both studies do, however, provide useful foundations upon which I built my own work in this dissertation.

The problem of postwar modernism in general, and the postwar house specifically, comprised one facet of my study; the relationship between *House Beautiful*, Gordon, the Pace Setter architects and Frank Lloyd Wright became yet another area of investigation. Wright was clearly an influence on many ideas bound up in the Pace Setter houses, and his concept of organic architecture was at the heart of the architectural theory expounded by Gordon and *House Beautiful*. The scholarly discussions of organic architecture in the postwar period are limited; the most notable studies are William Allin Storer's *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* (1993) and John Sergeant's *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian House: The Case for Organic Architecture* (1976).[7] Most accounts focus on Wright's development of the Usonian house, beginning in the 1930s, as a solution to the "small house problem." The link between Wright's low-cost organic model and the suburban ranch house has been suggested by Gwendolyn Wright, or in a more popular venue, by Alan Hess.[8] In the context of my research, it became important to offer a close examination of Frank Lloyd Wright's effort to disseminate and popularize his Usonian concepts, and to discern what contemporary architects (and clients) were able to learn from him.

Very little has been written to date about Elizabeth Gordon, or *House Beautiful's* Pace Setter House Program. Postal's dissertation contains a chapter on Gordon and her criticism of the International Style, but with little mention of the Pace Setter Program.[9] Dianne Harris's essay "Making Your Private World: Modern Landscape Architecture and *House Beautiful*, 1945-1965" discusses Gordon's promotion of the "American Style" of landscape design exemplified by the work of landscape architect Thomas Church.[10] Harris's analysis is that of a landscape historian, with architecture in the background. This dissertation provides the compliment: here, I analyze the Pace Setter Houses, with landscape architecture treated as an integrated component of the broad design schemes.

Of the twelve Pace Setter architects, most have existed in relative obscurity. To date, little has been written about Emil Schmidlin, Edwin Wadsworth, Marcus Stedman, Julius Gregory, Morgan Stedman, Vladimir Ossipoff, John deKoven Hill or Roger Rasbach. Richard Guy Wilson has spoken on Pace Setter architect Henry Eggers, though his "High Noon on the Mall: Modernism versus Traditionalism, 1910-1970" was not a monographic review of Eggers' work.[11] Randolph Henning, a practicing architect and independent scholar, has gathered materials for a biography of four-time Pace Setter architect Alfred Browning Parker (whose autobiography is forthcoming). Only Harwell Hamilton Harris has received monographic attention, in the work of Lisa Germany.[12] Given the lack of scholarly treatment for Gordon, the Pace Setter architects, the Pace Setter houses, and to the larger point, alternative modern architecture in postwar

America, this dissertation makes a substantial contribution to growing body of architectural history.

Extensive original research, including my thorough examinations of *House Beautiful* publications and archival material relating to Gordon, her staff, and the Pace Setter architects, provided the basis for my analysis and arguments. My initial research involved study of *House Beautiful* issues dating from 1945 to 1965. This investigation clarified significant developments of the postwar house and *House Beautiful*'s specific preferences, and provided a framework within which I could understand the function of the popular home magazine, or to use the industry term, the shelter press. The magazine's rhetoric and marketing, alongside the text and illustrations, quickly revealed a larger cultural narrative that moved beyond the simple publication of architectural trends.

For the specific study of Gordon and her directional role in the Pace Setter project, her small collection of papers at the Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives were useful. The Curtis Besinger Collection at the University of Kansas, the Alfred Browning Parker Papers the University of Florida, and the John deKoven Hill papers at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives revealed personal correspondence and editorial instructions that further illuminated not only the workings of the Pace Setter program and the philosophies that Gordon hoped to promote, but something of Gordon's personality and relationships to staff, professionals, and the building industry. Her correspondence with Frank Lloyd Wright and Bruno Zevi, while

limited, demonstrated her involvement in the promotion of organic architecture and her crucial alliances with these two men.

While much of the story unfolded in the published pages of *House Beautiful*, a great deal has come to light through an investigation of archives related to the seminal characters, the Pace Setter architects. Alfred Browning Parker's papers, which include drawings, photographs, specifications, sales receipts related to his four Pace Setter houses, as well as personal correspondence, and Gordon's AIA nomination package, became a valuable asset. The Harwell Hamilton Harris papers held at the University of Texas at Austin, along with collections associated with Harris's wife Jean Murray Bangs (a *House Beautiful* staff member), provided particular insight into the construction and publication of Harris's 1955 Pace Setter. Included in the collection at Austin is a 1954 master's thesis completed by Neal Lacey, a student collaborator on Harris's Pace Setter project. The John deKoven Hill: Papers, held at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives in Scottsdale, provided a limited amount of information for his 1960 Pace Setter, but decisively positioned Hill as a key staff member at *House Beautiful* and a continuous link between Gordon and Wright.

Oral histories have revealed large quantities of biographical information relating to the Pace Setter architects and Gordon. Of particular use were the published transcripts for interviews with Thomas Church, Miles Colean, Harwell Hamilton Harris, John deKoven Hill, and Cliff May. My personal interviews with Alfred Browning Parker and

Hill's long-time friend Cornelia Brierly allowed an intimate portrait of both Hill and Gordon to emerge.

Yet Gordon, the protagonist in this narrative, remains an elusive figure. Aside from the Smithsonian's small collection related to her seminal work on *shibui*, Gordon left no archives. She clearly believed that she had published everything she had to say about housing, organic design, style and taste.[13] But her unpublished biography and a manuscript for a book on "taste," both uncovered in the Curtis Besinger Collection at the University of Kansas indicate otherwise. While very much in the vein of her editorials at *House Beautiful*, these two works provide an unusually synthetic retrospective of her ideas. Gordon's views as well as her dynamic public presence are further confirmed by a series of speeches, found in the Thomas Church Papers and at the Smithsonian. Her friendships and professional associations remain a private affair; the few glimpses we have are available through extant correspondence, AIA nomination letters and a scrapbook of letters from her sixty-fifth birthday. These personal notes give every indication that despite her resolute nature and her penchant for stirring controversies, she was well-liked and respected.[14]

**Study Parameters**

The Pace Setter Program itself defines the limitations of this dissertation. Content is generally limited to the work of the Pace Setter architects, linked both by the coincidence of publication in *House Beautiful*, and their shared allegiance – in varying

degrees – to principles of organic design. Frank Lloyd Wright is indeed a pivotal figure, both for the Pace Setter architects and for this dissertation. But this dissertation is not specifically about Wright; it addresses architectural form and thought that evolved around him and perhaps because of him. With Wright in the background and the Pace Setter architects in the foreground, this study addresses the increasing popularization of organic design in postwar America, and the distillation of organic theory to the point where it could be rendered on a mass scale. The control mechanism remains, then, the Pace Setter houses and architects, all of whom were in some way concerned with creating an alterative form of modern design that incorporated central tenets of Wright's organic theory.

With the parameters thus defined, the element of refinement and selection of case studies remained critical to the cohesion of my project. The Pace Setter Program contained a large body of built material: between 1948 and 1965, with a "prologue" in 1946, Gordon and *House Beautiful* published seventeen Pace Setter houses designed by twelve different architects (see Appendix A: Catalog of Pace Setter Houses, and Appendix B: Catalog of Pace Setter Architects). Each designer and indeed each house was connected either directly or indirectly to the postwar organic movement, though a few of these houses emerged as more poignant representative examples of the larger story that I have tried to relay. Thus, I have chosen to focus on a subset of the Pace Setter houses for which there is a substantial amount of documentation outside of what was published in *House Beautiful*, and for which there was ample information regarding the

designer. This subset best represents the stages in the evolution of both postwar housing and the postwar organic movement.

I have deliberately selected *House Beautiful* as a narrative guide, and positioned Elizabeth Gordon as the protagonist of the story. Her editorial chronology, the order in which certain issues and built works appeared, informed the structure of my work. My decision was based upon three factors: first, the choice of *House Beautiful* as a the central source was determined by my desire to explore popular coverage of the postwar organic movement as opposed to that which appeared in the professional journals. The consistency of *House Beautiful*'s message throughout the postwar period, aided by the longevity and dominance of Gordon's leadership, was a large factor in this decision. The choice of a singular magazine is not without its limitations, and to counter any myopic affect, I have, at critical moments along the storyline, used other journals – professional publications, women's magazines, and competing shelter magazines – to provide points of comparison.

Second, while the Pace Setter architects (and their ideas and built works) comprise the content of the story, they were in many ways merely actors in a great drama that was cast, produced and directed almost single-handedly by Elizabeth Gordon. To continue this cinematic analogy, it is clear that the participation of architects such as Harwell Hamilton Harris, and cameo appearances by Frank Lloyd Wright, drew an audience and certainly amplified the quality of the overall Pace Setter program much as James Dean or Spencer Tracy would have drawn a movie-going audience in 1955. Even

with the inclusion of star architects, Gordon possessed a remarkable ability to find and showcase undiscovered talent, such as Alfred Browning Parker. As several of the Pace Setter architects have personally attested, *House Beautiful* often and purposefully provided them exposure that launched their design careers. There is much to be said about the role of Gordon as director and editor: her layer of interpretation and criticism (and willingness to connect architecture to larger issues of cultural modernity and national politics) gave larger meaning to this group of houses that were highly influential yet to this day hover just beyond the canon of postwar architectural history.

And finally, my choice of *House Beautiful* as the narrative construct is based in part on my desire to draw the contemporary reader along the same path which the magazine's postwar audience was led, in this case accompanied by the critical distance and wider context that the passage of time can allow.

**Terminology**

My first attempt to define "the postwar house" in both temporal and aesthetic terms quickly revealed that the existing terminology handed down by architectural historians was wholly inadequate. The phrase "postwar house" and all of its constituent parts required a great deal of unpacking. "House" would suffice, though in Elizabeth Gordon's perspective, "home" expressed a more precise sentiment. "Postwar" generally indicates the historical period extending from the Japanese surrender in August 1945, to some elusive date in the 1960s, located between Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and the

escalation of the Vietnam conflict under the Johnson administration (the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin attack was a decisive moment). Within the architectural discourse, the advent of postmodernism seems to indicate the end of the postwar era, often marked by Robert Venturi's 1966 publication *Complexity and Contradiction*. Even with "house" and "postwar" properly defined, the general term "postwar house" remains incredibly nondescript. The postwar house, that universal term adopted by most every survey of twentieth-century American architecture, is far too general. Unqualified, it remains void of meaning. My close study of postwar production and culture instead points to a distinct periodization, which allows a crucial refinement of our understanding of production during these two decades. Four decisive periods emerge: 1946 to 1949; 1950 to 1953; 1954 to 1959 (marked by the death of Frank Lloyd Wright); and 1960 to 1965. While the house of 1945 had a great deal in common with the house of 1939, the house of 1946 began to differ from its prewar predeccesors. The 1946 home had even less in common with a house of 1950; homes built between 1950 and 1953 were subject to an entirely different set of restrictions and requirements than those completed in the 1940s; a house from 1960 or 1965 was equally distinct. In only twenty years, American domestic architecture experienced a remarkable shift. Elizabeth Gordon viewed this as the maturing of a new American Style. In the development of an organic postwar house, this periodization can be viewed as steps leading to a final synthesis: by 1960 (and particularly following Wright's death) all of the pieces, so to speak, were on the table and the puzzle could at last be viewed in its entirety. Though just as it was completed, new

circumstances conspired to rip it apart. By 1966, the postwar house (organic or not) was defunct.

If the term "postwar house" was troublesome, defining "modern" proved problematic at best. It became clear to me that in order to successfully complete this project, I would need to re-construct the contemporary meaning of modern as it was understood between 1940 and 1965. Housing research conducted between 1939 and 1955 indicated that neither research scientists nor the public had a clear concept of what modern meant. To some, it meant *pilotis* and a flat roof; to others it meant a California ranch house; to others, a Cape Cod outfitted with an oversized picture window and the latest kitchen appliances. Modern was sometimes an aesthetic concept, sometimes spatial, sometime functional. Modern was used to describe certain architectural characteristics or elements, most often the open plan and the reduction or elimination of ornament. For others, like Gordon, modern indicated an attitude and way of living in tune with the times. In the twenty years after World War II, no cohesive or uncontested meaning of the term modern was really formed; the larger meaning and architectural forms attached to the elusive definition continually changed. To provide a framework in which to understand both the larger trajectory of modern movement and smaller trends within it, I have thus applied terms that seem to most accurately describe the type of modern under consideration at any given point in the narrative: incremental, livable, organic, and new or popular organic. These are not meant to be definitive labels as such; many designers about whom I write would have fought such compartmentalization. I use these terms to

provide an unmoving and common vocabulary that enables clarification of the gradual shift in the idea of modern toward a popularized form of organic architecture.

To address some of these terms: in the first chapter, incremental modernism refers to an additive approach to updating and "modernizing" the domestic architecture. In 1946, construction was still hampered by a shortage of materials and shortage of skilled labor. New domestic gadgets were available, but reached the consumer market only gradually. New ideas were slow to be implemented, so that the modernization of the domestic interior occurred before modernization on the exterior, and before the integration of the two. In California, where the largest numbers of postwar houses were constructed, these incremental measures were put in place early, though an evolution toward integrated design began soon after the war's end.

Livable, a term with roots in the 1930s, was liberally applied in the 1940s.[15] Government documents, shelter magazines, professional magazines, Fritz Burns, Frank Lloyd Wright and Cliff May all used the term to describe what they hoped to achieve. Livable generally embraced the combined idea of comfort, performance, and beauty. It often incorporated a concern for response to climate, thus paralleling what Sigfried Giedion described in 1954 as New Regionalism. Livable architecture could be technologically advanced, but was required to address human concerns from the psychological to the material. For the home builder and mass developer, livable encompassed the idea of economy: homes needed to be affordable for the average buyer, and economical in terms of use of land, space, and materials. In the large, rambling ranch

houses built for well-off clients, livable fused comfort and convenience with an elevated sense of aesthetics.

Organic design, as a term, becomes the pivot point of this dissertation. In defining this as a concept and a postwar architectural movement, I was not so much concerned with what organic had been (the history of the use of the term), but what became in the 1950s. In Wright's many publications, organic theory constantly evolved. For the rest of the architectural profession and those who wrote about it, the definition of organic architecture remained elusive. One of Wright's biographers, Robert Twombly, offered a definition on Wright's behalf: "If a building is organic, it is harmonious in all its parts, a coherent expression and unification of its environment, its inhabitants, materials, construction methods, site, purpose, cultural setting, and of the ideas which called it into being, each being a consequence of the others. An organic structure defines and prophesies life, grows along with those who use it, assumes its own 'essential reality' or 'internal nature,' and by including everything necessary and nothing unnecessary for solving the immediate architectural problem, is as unified and as economical as nature itself."[16] Even this definition is lacking; it does not illustrate what organic was, but rather what it was not. In this way, organic exists as a term of opposition, ready at any given moment to be invoked in the service of fighting a dominant (and wayward) mainstream. Bruno Zevi eloquently described its practitioners as "maniacally individualistic. They refuse to be labeled. Each one of them is quite prepared to be termed organic but only on

the condition that there are no other organic architects in the world, either now or in the future."[17]

But as Esther McCoy claimed, organic architects actually began to dominate the profession, their numbers nearly tripling in the 1950s.[18] These "architectural misfits," as she called them, represented one fork in the path of modern design. As McCoy saw it, "the Miesians [were] on the high road, the Wrightians on the low road."[19] While the Miesians received a great deal of attention in the professional press, organic designers found their own avenue for promotion, particularly in the residential market. If indeed the number of organic designers tripled in the postwar decades, few of their names carry the same recognition as Charles Eames or Pierre Koenig.

Nevertheless, organic designers played a significant role in the development of modern architecture in postwar America. Some were directly linked to Frank Lloyd Wright through apprenticeship; others were indirectly influenced by his voluminous writings and numerous media appearances. Still another group was tangentially tied to Wright – whether they knew it or not – and if only through the interpretations of historians, publishers, and critics. As with organic architecture, organic designers were individuals difficult to unite under one stylistic idiom or one stable definition. In postwar America, organic architecture did not merely continue the line of development of Wright's well-known Prairie period; the lineage was intact, but in the 1950s, a new form of organic design was born.

Other scholars have argued that Wright's theory of organic design was the foundation upon which much of the architecture under discussion here is based; this is to some degree true.[20] The extent to which Wright's ideas were a pervasive cultural force is difficult to assess, as is Wright's influence upon every designer who could be considered organic in the broadest terms. What we learn upon close investigation is that Wright's ideas about organic were evolving, just as other architects' ideas were simultaneously forming, perhaps indicating a case of parallel development equal to the influence of Wright on the second generation of organic architects. The principles underlying much of the domestic architecture of this period was as much traditional and vernacular as it was Wrightian.

Thus, the term I have chosen is new organic, meant to represent both Wright's own philosophical growth in the 1940s to his death in 1959, as well as his legacy amongst organic designers in what appears as a fully popularized version of organic that may or may not have had its roots with Wright. Organic in 1943 or in 1953 was not quite the same as it was in 1908; as Wright intended, it remained changeable. New practitioners and the popular press were crucial players in this evolution. The new purpose had at its heart a concern for man, for economics (both in the sense of money and resources used wisely), for regional responsiveness, for honesty and simplicity, for humanizing of modern architecture that was a successful merging of benefits and warming elements. The new organic was still (as Wright would have argued) concerned with the space within and the dissolution of boundaries as much as it was concerned with

possibilities of new materials. It remains, however, incredibly difficult to draw the line between architecture based upon principles of the new organic and architecture that merely adopted the organic aesthetic. Wright would have argued that the concept of integrated design, including the incorporation of integral ornament, established the definitive categorization.

New organic, as a historian's tool, is useful; as a historical assessment, it can problematic. Architects practicing in this vein during the 1940s and 1950s did not use "new" as adjective, I have chosen to apply it as a way to demarcate a much broader concept that accommodated Wright, responded to Wright, and allowed practitioners to implement timely changes of their own formulation. The second generation of organic architects incorporated elements of incremental modernism, of livable modernism, and of new regionalism in a far more practical way that Wright ever did. Their practice was not bolstered by esoteric theory, but by anti-theoretical principles. New organic, is, on most fundamental level, popularized organic. Although the term did not exist during the period under investigation, its meaning was constructed for the mainstream – often by the mainstream press – and was interpreted in a practical, comprehensible manner, epitomized by Pace Setter architect Alfred Browning Parker's *You and Architecture: A Practical Guide to the Best in Building* (1965).[21]

I have avoided the attaching "ism" to the term new organic specifically to preserve what seems to be a universal rejection of "ists" and "isms," beginning with Zevi's writings. While "ism" would have provided a convenient grammatically device, it

would also suggest a formality that was not present, and likely not desired. As Zevi himself suggested, many of these organic designers would have never labeled themselves as organic in the first place. But, again, the appellation becomes a historian's tool to begin to understand how this architecture was created, interpreted, and received, by both the popular press and potential consumer.

Finally, a note on my continued use of the term consumer rather than "client:" this choice is crucial to understanding the postwar house. In many regards, domestic architecture after World War II became a commodity. Much like automobiles and appliances, the house was defined by research and development studies, "desires" data, and planned obsolescence. The house in many ways became a luxury item, acquired to mark status and create identity. "Consumer" becomes an apt description for the postwar homebuyer who, aside from his inclusion in demography and statistics, had little to say about architectural form. This may seem to undermine my consistent argument regarding organic as architecture for the individual – but in fact underscores a major challenge faced by postwar architects at the forefront of this discussion: moderate-cost homes were in high demand, yet many architects sought to create architecture for an unknown client that moved beyond architecture for the average. Further, this suggests that a constant dialogue was open between the mass market (architecture for consumer) and the custom market (architecture for the client), and that many postwar architects, whether by necessity or choice, worked both markets simultaneously.

I have also chosen the term consumer for its economic connotations in postwar America. During the Depression and the subsequent world war, the conventional focus on the economy of production shifted. Consumption "became new index of economic and national health," with the idea that a nation of consumers would drive production, and thus revitalize the national economy.[22] In this "mature economy," to use John Maynard Keynes's concept, consumption was the largest factor in forming a new American cultural identity. Architecture and design responded (and perpetuated) this new identity, not only within the house itself, but in its contents, from an increased amount of storage space for material possessions, to carports and multi-car garages, kitchens expanded to hold every imaginable gadget, and living rooms designed around radio, hi-fi, and television. Mass consumption and mass communication had a lasting impact on American architecture and American identity.

## Chapter II: The First Postwar House

Elizabeth Gordon, editor-in-chief at *House Beautiful*, believed the postwar American home should be more than a house. It offered more than shelter. It contained more than a superficial collection of decorative objects. Extending both materially and metaphorically beyond its own walls, the postwar home was the heart of the American family, a Ruskinian locus of physical asylum and psychological refuge. As war-time production halts and technological advances encouraged architects to re-think the postwar house (at least on paper), critics and tastemakers like Gordon attempted to overhaul America's domestic values.

Gordon was neither designer nor artist, yet she became a seminal figure in architectural journalism, criticism, and domestic reform (Fig. 2.1). Born in 1906 in Logansport, Indiana, Gordon was the only child of Byron and Angeline Gordon. Her parents and live-in grandmother adhered to a strict Methodist faith, and exerted tight control over her early life.[1] Her father worked for the railroad, and her mother presumably ran the household. The combination of the family's disciplined life and the relatively small size of Logansport guaranteed that Gordon had almost no access to high culture, and little exposure to modern architecture.[2] Her world expanded when she entered college in 1924 at Northwestern University in Evanston, a suburb north of Chicago. She clearly attempted to break free from her restrictive past; however, her

freshman year was cut short by a transgression of Methodist rule: her family removed her for attending a dance. The Gordons expected her to continue her education through correspondence courses, but she had developed a strong sense of self-determination and forcefully resisted.[3] She eventually won the right to study liberal arts at the University of Chicago, under the chaperone of her mother.[4] Influenced by a college curriculum that was "freethinking as opposed to conservative," Gordon developed a passion for research, discovery, and knowledge.[5] When she received her bachelor's degree in 1927, she was likely pressured to pursue a traditional feminine career; she spent her first postgraduate year as a high-school English teacher.[6]

Inspired by the Pulitzer-prize winning author Edna Ferber, Gordon soon discovered a passion for journalism. She must have recognized a growing opportunity for professional women, and (following the model set by one of Ferber's fictional characters) moved to New York.[7] Newly married to fellow New York journalist Carl Hafey Norcross, she began working in 1928 as a copywriter at the *New York World*, the *New York Journal American*, and a number of advertising agencies.[8] Though Gordon demonstrated skill as a writer, she was frustrated by the lack of prestige and challenge she experienced. She believed the shortest route to success and professional satisfaction was to specialize in one field of study, to become an "expert" on something: Gordon chose the American single-family home.

As she began to write columns on home maintenance for the *New York Herald Tribune*, Gordon rose through the ranks of professional journalism as an advocate for the

informed consumer. Her methodical approach established her trustworthiness and expertise; by 1937, she was consulting for *Good Housekeeping* and her weekly columns were syndicated nationally.[9] Her desire to educate a popular audience was underscored by the publication of her consumer-oriented book *More House for Your Money* (1937) (Fig. 2.2).[10] In this "how-to" book, she and co-author Dorothy Ducas offered practical advice for Americans looking to build a new home. Chapter content included advice on financing, purchasing, planning, and designing the single-family home.[11] In short, Gordon and Ducas offered a non-technical manual on "how to build, and how to get what you want for what you can pay."[12] Architectural style was of no concern to the authors, and by implication, they must have believed it was of little concern to their readers. Instead, personal requirements, individual taste, economy, and comfort were prioritized. But more importantly, Gordon and Ducas advanced one significant and very progressive idea: the consumer, when he or she was properly informed, could exert complete control over residential design. They believed that when building a house, the typical American could become a "monarch of a small domain…guiding the activities of a small army of subjects who are building according to your every wish."[13] For Gordon and Ducas, this was the ultimate realization of a self-determined domestic future.

After only a decade in New York, Gordon established an impressive portfolio, and her "intensive immersion in the subject matter of houses" increased professional stature.[14] When Kenneth Stowell left *House Beautiful* for *Architectural Record*, Gordon was offered his position as editor-in-chief. She joined the *House Beautiful* staff in October

1941.[15] As a non-architect and as a woman, Gordon was an unusual choice for this high-profile position. Most of the leading professional architecture journals and architecture departments in the popular home magazines were headed by men: Howard Meyer at *Architectural Forum*; Stowell at *Architectural Record;* John Entenza at *Arts & Architecture*; John Normille at *Better Homes & Gardens*; Richard Pratt at *Ladies' Home Journal* (formerly of *House & Garden*); Otis Lee Wiese at *McCall*'s; Herbert Mayes at *Good Housekeeping* (assisted by Maggie Cousins); and William A. H. Birnie at *Woman's Home Companion* (with Caleb Hornbostel as the architecture consultant). Within the male-dominated publishing profession, Gordon became one of the few women to control a mass-circulation magazine. Though she was well-qualified and ambitious, the outbreak of World War II and the conscription of many young professionals may have aided her appointment. Though her male counterparts might have believed and perhaps preferred that her stay would last only through the war, Gordon remained at the helm of *House Beautiful* for the next twenty-three years.

From the beginning of her career as editor, Gordon fought to become more than a female expert on domesticity. While competing journals, both women's magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, or *McCall's*, and the popular home or "shelter" magazines such as *Better Homes & Gardens* or *House and Garden* focused on gendered topics such as entertaining, cooking, gardening and interior decorating, under Gordon's leadership *House Beautiful* transcended the industry stereotype to become what architects such as Harwell Hamilton Harris considered "a serious architectural

influence."[16] Almost single-handedly, Gordon changed the direction of the magazine to fully embrace architecture. She began to address what she understood as the most pressing concerns of the emerging home-buying public: the appropriate form, function, content, and cost of the American house. She was "indefatigable in her pursuit of good domestic architecture," and possessed the "gift…of being just about five minutes ahead of the rest of the world."[17] She became an activist editor, and through her publication, a catalyst for new conceptions of residential architecture. Her business was better living. Attractive, bold, opinionated, and thoroughly compelling, she was sure to make an impact.[18]

Just as Gordon assumed her new position at *House Beautiful* in the fall of 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and the United States went to war. The need to house defense workers escalated, and within only a few short years, necessitated one of the largest building campaigns in history.[19] The speed at which new American suburbs were built was unprecedented, spreading a culture of technological advancement and modernization further and faster than previously imaginable. Independent builders such as Levitt and Sons, David D. Bohannon, Fred Trump, and Fritz B. Burns, all of whom could operate on a larger scale and with greater speed than publicly-sponsored programs, were pushed to find the most efficient means of mass construction. Architects such as Skidmore Owings and Merrill, Walter Gropius, Louis Kahn, Buckminster Fuller, Richard Neutra, and Frank Lloyd Wright simultaneously scrambled to find their place in this new world of instant housing.[20]

By 1943, the fortunes of war turned in favor an Allied victory, and architectural discussions extended beyond war-time defense housing.[21] Visions of the postwar house appeared in museum exhibitions, department store displays, Hollywood movies, books, the architectural press, and popular magazines. Everyone, as the *Saturday Evening Post* observed, had a "postwar plan."[22]

**Housing 194X: The Search for Modernism**

In April 1945, Elizabeth Gordon posed the "$64 question" for *House Beautiful* readers and the American housing industry: "how much change will people want in postwar homes?"[23] The answer: not a lot, and certainly not all at once. Reader's mail, consumer questionnaires, and government survey statistics all indicated the housing market's preference for slow, incremental approach to design. Gordon knew what type of postwar house the public wanted, and in 1945, it was not "modern."

The public perception, accurate or not, of modern architecture as an avant-garde and functionalist had been established in part by the Museum of Modern Art's International Style Exhibition in 1932 (Fig. 2.3). The uniform and austere image of modernism as presented by MoMA persisted long after the exhibit closed. Into the 1940s, historians, curators, critics, and the professional architectural press had done little to soften modernism's austere image. At the close of World War II, as homeownership became reality for a wider segment of the American population, the image of the "modern house" as a Corbusian pavilion – a monochromatic, cubic mass on stilts – still

dominated the public's architectural imagination (Fig. 2.4). The average American, as data proved, remained apprehensive of modernist abstraction. For those who sought to modernize postwar design, consumer hesitancy presented a significant challenge.

By the fall of 1945, the beginning of the postwar era, architects and builders had yet to solve to formal and functional problem of the postwar house. Modern architecture, as it had been conceived in Europe in the late 1920s, transported to the United States by the 1930s, and codified at MoMA's International Style Exhibition, presented one avenue of exploration. But the American consumer resisted the ideal of multi-family housing units championed by many European modernists, and opposed any form of *existence minimum*. As Gordon and *House Beautiful* recognized, the modernist strategies of simplification and rationality were not inherently flawed; rather, the physical manifestations of these ideas were too radical, too revolutionary. Gordon, and many critics like her, believed that such a sudden and complete departure from American domestic tradition would never appeal to the mass consumer audience; as Gordon wrote in 1945, a residential "'evolution' was all that was wanted and all that could possibly succeed."[24]

As a student of social change, Gordon recognized that architectural taste was slow to form and even slower to transform. Though she was convinced that postwar architecture would continue to creep toward modern, it would "always [keep] its design roots in the near past."[25] She knew that extremes would not sell architecture, at least not to the audience who would constitute the greatest portion of the postwar market, the very

same audience who subscribed to *House Beautiful*. If a radical architectural revolution would not be possible, Gordon believed that an evolutionary approach – one that built upon the architectural past – could succeed. The first step toward achieving a fusion of past and present was more concerned with performance than with style. In Gordon's studied view, the postwar consumer wanted "the function of modern architecture, without the look of modern."[26]

Gordon was not the only editor-critic to promote architecture that was "modern, but not *too* modern."[27] Other figures within the shelter press and women's magazines recognized the very same conservatism in American residential taste. Editors (many of whom were architects), such as John Normile at *Better Homes & Gardens* and Mary Davis Gillies at *McCall's*, made similar claims, substantiated through their publications' collected consumer desires data.[28] Change and progress were not undesirable, as *Woman's Home Companion* observed, but the American public seemed to want "modern on the inside" and traditional on the outside. Despite a clearly documented desire for modernization, and the majority of postwar consumers were likely to choose something between the extremes presented by the architectural profession. They would not want "push button palaces of metal and glass and plastic" nor would they settle for the outmoded Cape Cod cottage.[29] They would want something that fell in between – the best of the past merged with the best of the future.

The search for a middle ground, a sort of mediated modernism, was legitimized by figures such as Joseph Hudnut. Though he was an early proponent of modernism (he

brought Walter Gropius into Harvard's School of Design), he recognized that perhaps American culture was moving beyond the 1920s and 1930s conception of modern. In "The Post-Modern House," he argued that the average homebuyer in 1945 wanted a "Cape Cod cottage, which, upon being opened, will be seen to be a refrigerator-to-live-in" (Fig. 2.5).[30] In what must have been a veiled reference to Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Wichita House, Hudnut observed that the consumer did not want the "outward shape of an aluminum bean," but rather to have the latest gadgets "seasoned with that picture, sentiment, and symbol" of the traditional home (Fig. 2.6).[31] Thus, the designers of the postwar house needed to find the middle ground; in formal terms, this indicated an architectural solution that reconciled the liberation of the flat-roofed modernist box and the confinement of the Cape Cod cottage (Fig. 2.7). As Hudnut wrote, postwar consumers were not just searching for efficiency and modernity, but for a dwelling that contained the "the experience of an architecture in which emotional values are fused into technological values."[32] In short, they sought the "idea of *home*."[33]

Modern architects, many of whom would enter the house-for-sale market for the first time, played a crucial role in re-defining the postwar idea of home; despite their professional influence, the housing market was increasingly influenced by the consuming public. Howard Myers, writing for the *Architectural Forum* in 1945, predicted a complete reversal of roles. He believed that in the postwar decades, domestic design would be guided not by the architecture profession or professional publications, but by popular shelter magazines such as *House Beautiful*.[34] In his assessment, *Forum* could keep

practitioners ahead of the public, but the consumer magazines would "reflect and strongly influence the public's views."[35] Myers clearly understood the growing power of consumers (and their representative publications); he believed that research institutes and government agencies assessed consumer needs, and the popular press converted that "*need* to *demand*." According to Myers, the press, not the architect, would determine what the postwar consumer really wanted.[36] The "barrage of propaganda for better houses and better living," represented in part by *House Beautiful*, proved an effective mechanism for swaying public opinion.[37] As such, the shelter press became a "leavening influence between the creative designers and their ultimate market."[38] As the new mediator and arbiter of taste, the shelter press became increasingly responsible for the synchronization of the efforts of the building profession with the desires of a mass public.

The power of the consumer was that of collective agency: a "group" whose desires were acknowledged, if averaged. Intense market research and social science surveys conducted between 1936 and 1950 gave voice to this large group who would indeed buy homes, statistically typified as Mr. and Mrs. America (Fig. 2.8).[39] Young purchasers between the ages of twenty-five and forty-nine comprised a large segment of the market, with an average annual income of $2,992.[40] This solidly middle-class group would pay (and finance) three to five times their annual income for a new home, more than twice the prewar price.[41] Housing surveys, forty-one of which were summarized in *What People Want When They Buy a House* (1955), provided a useful gauge of what consumers believed they needed, what they simply wanted, and the hierarchal importance of

architectural characteristics (Fig. 2.9).[42] Future home buyers were overwhelmingly concerned with good planning, physical function and usable space. Their opinions underscored the perceived shortfall of contemporary homes: lack of storage, poor organization and layout, undersized bathrooms, and outdated appliances.[43] Buyers were looking for homes that were well-located (preferably on large suburban lots adjacent to schools, stores, jobs, and public transportation), spacious, well-priced.

The specific features, components of plan and the contents of the house were also polled in these years, and justified the form the "average" house would adopt. The majority of home-buyers wanted a new three-bedroom, two-bath single level home clad in wood, stucco or brick.[44] Most potential buyers wanted larger rooms, separate living and dining areas, additional eating facilities in the kitchen, and increased storage space throughout the house.[45] Though basements and attics were considered dispensable, the quintessential marker of the American family home, the front porch, was still highly desirable.[46] Not surprisingly – given the concurrent rise in automobile ownership – the most consistently desired new feature was a garage.[47]

Though the architectural profession was embroiled debates over modern style, the earliest postwar consumer were remarkable ambivalent.[48] In comparison with other housing priorities, such as space and location, architectural style was the least important quality. Yet if given a preference, consumers preferred traditional styles such as Cape Cod or Colonial, particularly on the East Coast.[49] On the other hand, and particularly in the West, consumers overwhelmingly preferred "Modern," a broad category that include

the progeny of the International Style, ranch houses and "contemporary" design.[50] In the western United States in particular, the geographical region in which the largest population influx and building boom occurred, there was a tremendous market for what the consumer understood as modern. Survey data fail however, to indicate how the respondents actually defined modern.[51]

**An Articulate Blueprint**

With the definition of modern architecture under contention, a number of merchant builders began to offer solutions. Some, like Levitt & Sons, attempted to sell virtually unaltered prewar models of Cape Cod cottages as the new "postwar" house; others, such as Fritz B. Burns offered a revised, if conservative, model.

Burns, a Minnesota native, amassed his first fortune selling real estate in Los Angeles during the 1920s (Fig. 2.10). By 1934, he was a destitute tent-dweller at Playa Del Rey. Like many who were battered by the Depression, Burns found his salvation in the lucrative war-time building industry. In partnership with Fred W. Marlow (an engineer, real estate tycoon and the first district director of the Southern California Federal Housing Administration), Burns began to build large-scale housing tracts in Los Angeles (Fig. 2.11).[52] Burns was not merely a regional land developer; he exerted a great deal of influence at the national level. As the first president of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), he established a national lobby for private builders as early as 1943. Representing the interests of men such as David Bohannon in San Francisco, J.C.

Nichols in Kansas City, Hugh Potter in Houston, and the Levitts in New York, Burns and the NAHB soon became a force in Washington D.C.

Because he felt that private developers (rather than government-supported public entities) were best suited to design and build low-cost housing and communities, Burns lobbied to transfer defense housing from the federal realm to private industry. He successfully argued, supported by data from the National Housing Agency (NHA), that the single-family detached house best met the requirements of the projected postwar buyer. The small house would also prove easiest for builders to erect quickly and in vast quantities. Quantity was of the utmost concern. The NHA forecasted that by 1956, 12.6 million new homes would be needed nationwide; of these, 625,000 would be required in California, with 280,000 in Los Angeles County alone.[53] The "small" house of less than 1,100 square feet would eventually prevail, but would aspire to a quality of spaciousness made possible by fewer small rooms and open planning.[54] With his stalwart support of the single-family home, Burns ran counter to many Los Angeles modernists who believed dense social housing was the ideal solution for the postwar housing crisis. Despite the opposition, Burns and the NAHB lobbied effectively, and discouraged public housing blocks.

If detached single-family home won favor, the form and architectural style still remained highly contested. Despite much internal debate over the meaning of modern and the function of architectural style, most designers and builders seemed to agree that the postwar home should be streamlined, functionally convenient, simplified (in terms of

exterior ornament), and prefabricated (at least in terms of interior components). Tensions arose between those who argued for continuation of pre-war architectural tradition, those who advocated for complete design revolution, and those who found themselves in the middle. This third group found themselves between polarized forces, arguing that while small advancements had been made in terms of materials and technique, the largest change would be the ascendancy of the "California-style house."[55] The California Style, as promoted by this third group, merged contemporary advances in construction techniques and consumer appliances with traditional concepts of the American home – specifically pitched roofs, natural materials, and a hearth.

Burns positioned himself within this third group. Though he was on the centerline of the architectural debate, he was not ambivalent; he had a specific vision of the ideal postwar home. Using information gathered by his in-house Research Division, he argued that the key to postwar architectural production was not radical revolution, but gradual evolution. [56] He did not support a departure from architectural traditions, knowing full well "through long experience that the stamp of public approval is not quickly given to new materials or new architectural concepts."[57] Yet he recognized that innovations would be embraced, particularly those that provided "the most home for the least money." His effort toward compromise, as he argued, would allow "the most happiness for the least money."[58] His pre-war experience in land development and his close study of the housing market between 1943 and 1945 convinced him that the public preferred architecture that evoked a "home-like" atmosphere. He believed the consumer would view variants of

modern architecture that bordered on "revolutionary…strange and bizarre" as "disconcerting."[59] Certainly, Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion prototype of 1927 would have struck Burns as far too radical. Though immersed in the experimental climate of Los Angeles, where designers such as R.M. Schindler and Richard Neutra were rising to prominence, Burns hesitated to accept any depiction of the "house of tomorrow" as a descendant of prewar avant-garde architecture. He firmly believed that, at the close of World War II, it was "time for architects and builders to get down to earth and arrive at a common understanding regarding plans and designs for post-war homes. Theirs is the responsibility of clarifying the confusion already created in the public mind by the publicizing of what seems to some of us to be unrealistic and fantastic 'houses from Mars.'"[60]

In *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943), Burns laid out his "articulate blueprint" for the postwar house (Fig. 2.12).[61] He urged architects and buyers alike to start from familiar domestic models, an approach that revealed his own conservative position. Improvements upon these models, in Burns's plan, would be firmly based upon practical and market-driven design. He argued that the house, in both form and content, should be governed by the concept of livability: "easy to look at, easy to live in, easy to pay for" (Fig. 2.13).[62]

When *Livable Homes* was published, Burns explored livable architecture through an exterior styling that continued trends of the late 1930s and early 1940s, trends he was surely invested in perpetuating to defend his own recent housing developments (Fig.

2.14; 2.15). His conservatism ensured the continued viability of the Burns stock plan (Fig. 2.16). Though the Cape Cod cottage was still immensely popular, he slowly began support the development of regional variations such as the "California Style" loosely defined by low-pitched roofs, masonry fireplace core, vast expanses of glass, and flexible indoor-outdoor living space (Fig. 2.17). He saw little room for innovation in terms of materials, arguing that the "time-tested" standards of wood, brick, concrete, tile, glass, and copper and copper based alloys would prevail, surely to the pleasure of his sponsor Revere. He encouraged prefabricated components such as window units, only when the "look of prefabrication" could be avoided. The real innovation, according to Burns's articulate blueprint, would come in the "great amplification and perfection of interior equipment," (including insulation and air conditioning), and in the reduction of maintenance and housekeeping efforts.[63] Burns promised labor-saving devices, gadgets, mechanical dishwashers, garbage disposals, fast-working laundry machines, and the latest in lighting arrangements and fixtures.[64] Though variety was prized, Burns argued that "contrary to many drawing board presentations exhibited as 'homes of the future,' it is my belief that the post-war home in appearance, size and general outline, will not differ too greatly from the attractive designs of recently built dwellings to which we are all accustomed."[65]

Burn's conservative stance in part reflected the dominant postwar finance structure. In the 1930s and 1940s, the United States government bolstered the troubled housing industry. Aid came in many forms: public housing for the poor; funding for the

development of new materials and new methods of prefabrication; and most importantly, as FHA-administered loans for military veterans.[66] With federal assistance, however, came policies and design guidelines. These were of great concern for designers and builders: the majority of all homes constructed after the war were to be financed – either from the builder side or the buyer side – through the FHA.[67]

In their 1936 Technical Bulletin *Modern Design*, the FHA granted each regional Insuring Office the power to make binding decisions regarding "acceptability" of design. Criteria were both objective and subjective, and in part based upon the local evaluator's sense of what type of house their local real estate market would support.[68] They were conscious of factors several factors that influenced regional markets: the strength of local building traditions; a perceived "resistance to change;" and the embracement of aesthetic experiments, officially described as architectural "nonconformity."[69] From an institutional point of view, the FHA found it "useless" to "offer resistance to change which is rooted in changing modes of thought and living," but were concerned with "novelty" and "mere fad" that would threaten the stability of their program.[70] *Modern Design* encouraged livability and convenience as components of "elemental" modernism, referring to houses that may not have been interpreted as modern in the "sense generally used" but in the sense that it met other contemporary requirements and tied directly to plan and structural components.[71] The FHA argued that the American home, as it had developed until 1936, was modern in terms of function (plan in particular), but lacked the

characteristic stylistic features of Modernism as defined by the International Style in 1932.

The FHA clearly embraced the pragmatic advancements of modern design (improvements related to building methods and household equipment), but were hesitant to embrace the aesthetic associated with Modernism. As a government agency, the FHA did not reject modern design outright. Yet, as Gwendolyn Wright has suggested, evaluators may have been "instructed to lower the rating score of houses with conspicuously modern designs because they were not considered a sound investment."[72] Whether because of investment stability or aesthetic inclination, this federally sanctioned preference toward "conforming" design had a profound effect on the shape of the postwar house. If the FHA's preference was any indication of a new direction, and if Burns's housing developments were typical, a conservative evolution rather than radical revolution was destined to define postwar housing. And, significantly, this preference was supported by the Southern California FHA district office – of which Burns's partner Fred Marlow was the first Director.[73]

**Fritz Burns and the First Postwar House**

On March 17, 1946, Fritz Burns opened the "First Postwar House" to the Los Angeles public. He conceived the First Postwar House (as it was named by *House Beautiful*) not as a house-for-sale, or even a house in which to live, but as a demonstration home on permanent display (Fig. 2.18). Positioned on a prominent lot at

the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Highland Avenue in Los Angeles, the house beckoned the inspection and reaction of over a million visitors (Fig. 2.19).[74]

Designed by Los Angeles architects Walter Wurdeman and William Becket, the First Postwar House was a laboratory for new domestic products, materials, designs, construction methods, and furnishing strategies. Builder J. Paul Campbell (with whom Burns had worked at his Toluca Woods, West Side and Westchester developments) constructed the project, which was fitted and furnished by hundreds of manufacturers and retailers eager to launch their products in the postwar market.[75]

The First Postwar House offered more than a window-shopping opportunity; it had a significant architectural and cultural impact. Burns, always a master of publicity, ensured that his First Postwar House received maximum media exposure; *House Beautiful* offered perhaps the most detailed (if not critical) review of the house.[76] Elizabeth Gordon carefully positioned it as the future of housing, and the embodiment of postwar American dream. In her editorial accompanying the First Postwar House, Gordon urged her readers to study Burns's example, one of the "best houses" being produced at the time. Her intent was didactic: she believed that through careful observation, consumers could understand how they, too, could buy or build better houses.

*House Beautiful* promoted the house as a postwar prototype, but fully recognized that readers may embrace the entire design concept, aesthetic, fittings and furnishings. Yet, for *House Beautiful*, the unlimited array of choices available in the First Postwar House represented "the stuff that better dreams are made of."[77] Part of this dream

included a progressive individualization of the single-family home, a latent cultural desire to convert a house to an "expression of the owner's way of life and personality."[78] In this context, *House Beautiful* demonstrated that personalization could be achieved through technologies adopted to fit individual needs and desires. This "showcase house," wrote *House Beautiful*, was designed not only to "cram" in every possible new product, but to encapsulate new ideas for better living.[79] These new ideas, for the most part, were centered upon providing the greatest degree of comfort and convenience for the least cost. To counter the widespread myth that these "better houses" came at a steeper price, Gordon – and Burns – encouraged the new home buyer to find a way to get more house for their money, a clear allusion to themes from Gordon's 1937 book. "In fact," wrote Gordon, "the less you have to spend the more you should emulate the best. Only the rich can afford to make mistakes or to dream little dreams."[80]

With over 350 new ideas for better living, *House Beautiful* suggested that the First Postwar House be "viewed for the meaning of its parts, rather than as a whole."[81] This emphasis on constituent parts rather than an architectural whole is revealing, and offers significant insight into the process of modernization in 1946. The approach taken in the First Postwar House indicated a number of restrictions or barriers were still in place, many of them economic. Builders and promotional magazines clearly understood that the American buyer was still restricted by budget. The solution, as the First Postwar House suggested, was to introduce new features of design, decoration, and technological advancement, in small increments that could be adopted or implemented over time, as

financial constraints allowed. The First Postwar House indicated that while some consumers were looking to buy for the first time, and some hoped to improve what they had (at least as a short-term solution), the entire package was neither available nor affordable. Because of specific economic limitations, the concept of modernization, even in architectural terms, remained incremental.

In the First Postwar House, a gradual architectural shift occurred. This shift was not overwhelmingly formal or aesthetic, but rather functional and spatial (Fig. 2.20; 2.21). Modification and modernization, then, move from inside outward. Wurdeman and Becket's concept of the exterior was not revolutionary, but did provide an alternative even to what Burns had built in the preceding two years with architect Howard Hunter Clayton and builder J. Paul Campbell.[82] The exterior was characterized by a low-pitched roof, a subdued use of redwood plywood combined with stone, and a dominant fireplace mass (Fig. 2.22). The entrance court, framed in stone, was executed in tinted cement with inset redwood strips (Fig. 2.23). The carport wall was treated in a similar manner and as part of the main house (Fig. 2.24). The roof was clad with aluminum panels, a likely result of the re-direction of the aluminum industry from war-time applications to private construction industry. None of this was an accident or coincidence. The use of natural materials on the exterior was not promoted as a component of design principle, though was clearly part of the desired aesthetic; the application of redwood and to some degree, natural stone, had become immensely popular and evocative of a unique "California Style."

In terms of spatial developments, the First Postwar House implemented planning features that suggested spaciousness and encouraged outdoor living. For example, the double U-shaped plan allowed for the insertion of two protected courtyards, a provision for the sort of indoor-outdoor lifestyle that was becoming desirable in the immediate postwar years (Fig. 2.25). The barbeque terrace underscored the designers' accommodation of activities newly associated with an active, outdoor modern lifestyle (Fig. 2.26).

The First Postwar House offered a piecemeal approach to modern design. The architectural package was clearly designer-driven, and displayed Wurdeman and Becket's interpretation of the new California Style. But the public and publishers seemed more concerned with improvements in the interior, which displayed little of the sleek modern simplicity attempted on the exterior. The technological components, appliances, and gadgetry, all of which were decidedly consumer driven, remained the primary focus. With this focus on consumer goods, Burns, the architects, or the interior designer made little effort to unify the interior design (Fig. 2.27).

The First Postwar House was conceived out of an astute analysis of market forces, and was designed to incorporate specific elements that met consumer demands. For example, the house contained a modernized kitchen with expansive cabinetry and engineered space for the latest appliances (Fig. 2.28); a streamlined and space-efficient bathroom with easy-to-maintain surfaces (Fig. 2.29); and a large master bedroom suite complete with a large bed and a "control panel" headboard for telephone, intercom, and

hi-fi equipment (Fig. 2.30). This consideration of consumer comfort (or really, technological pleasure) not only reflected the growing influence of the mass-market consumer, but emphasized a significant cultural shift: architecture, once the purview of the artist, was now influenced by "experts" privy to scientifically-acquired data far outside the realm of aesthetics. The public acceptance and encouragement of this new approach to design was clearly followed a new faith in science, bolstered by non-trivial developments in atomic energy, nuclear weaponry, and the isolation of DNA (first discovered in 1944 and isolated in 1952). Possibly for the first time, popular architecture was defined by scientific research and data rather than philosophical or aesthetic vision.

As a "laboratory for testing public tastes," the First Postwar House was tremendously informative.[83] Burns was one of the first developers to respond to the consumer desires data of the mid-1940s. His First Postwar House was a proving ground, and effectively gauged the reaction of the viewers who visited the site between 1946 and its reformulation as the Post-Postwar House in 1951.[84] The house underscored a new impetus for production: consumer demand, measured in statistically significant numbers that move beyond the specific single client. The finishes and furnishings of Burns's house were intended to impact the entire house-for-sale market. In this context, the relationship between the First Postwar House and the custom-built architectural icons that were simultaneously published in leading professional magazines throughout the 1940s and 1950s offered a compelling juxtaposition. The growing collaboration between the architect and the mass developer indicated that an important bridge was built, and

strengthened by the popular press: from Burns with Wurdeman and Becket, to Paul Trousdale with Allen Siple, to Joseph Eichler with Anshen & Allen, Emmons, and A. Quincy Jones, to David Bohannon with Morgan Stedman and Edwin Wadsworth. The collaboration between architects and landscape architects such as Garrett Eckbo and Thomas Church should also be noted.

The First Postwar House, as conceived by Burns, must be understood from four vantage points: from that of the market (which implied broader economic and social context); that of the architect (which may or may not be in alliance with the builder); that of the consumer; and that of the promoter. Burns exemplified the private operative builder whose marketing genius significantly affected public taste. His efforts were not geared toward social reform, but toward selling houses.[85] The First Postwar House, then, was significant not as a representative of an idealized and fully modern home, but as an additive approach to modernization. Burns clearly understood that aside from the pure economics of affordability and availability, Americans would likely "enter the future….in bits and pieces."[86]

Burns knew his market; in Los Angeles, he exerted a powerful influence on postwar housing. Burns, unlike John Entenza with the *Art & Architecture* Case Study House Program, produced and marketed his homes with the buyer in mind. Yet Burns kept his designers on the periphery of production. Thus, the role of the architect was problematic. The demand for architectural services increased in tandem with the demand for houses, and the architects of the immediate postwar years were interested in the

problem of the small and affordable house. Most of the larger developers, like Burns, employed architects to develop the prototypical plans and derivatives. But the voice of the design professional was often subsumed by marketing spin and publicity campaigns. From the viewpoint of the developer, and of many popular magazines, the consumer voice was the most sought-after. The consumer concept of modernization, incremental as it was, was the deciding factor in house design in 1946.

As architects and builders struggled to find a new approach to modern housing, solutions appeared in conservative increments. As Fritz Burns's First Postwar House demonstrated, the evolutionary approach to redefining modern often meant an inside-out design process. To meet consumer demands, changes first occurred at the level of the floor plan (the provision of open space that was expanded to the outdoors by means of increased use of glass). The contents of the house, such as specifically "engineered" storage spaces and appliances, were perhaps the greatest selling point and the most certain visual identifier of a "modern house."

While this early form of postwar design was appealing, livable, buildable and ultimately sellable, it lacked an element of unity and psychological satisfaction. *House Beautiful,* though one of the biggest promoters of Burns's prototype, was quick to realize that this incremental and piecemeal approach to modern design was insufficient. Elizabeth Gordon, in particular, must have recognized that with exterior form and interior design, the First Postwar House was not a marked departure from pre-war domestic architecture. Yet this house played a crucial role in shifting the framework of theory, and

encouraged new conceptions of modernism to be adopted by the architect, the builder, the consumer, and the critic. American culture was changing, largely in response to World War II, and figures like Gordon – with their convincing promotional techniques – forced design culture to respond. The single-family home was suddenly needed in service of an entirely new project. That project was creating a new American identity.

## Chapter III: Setting the Pace

### Buying Modern, Being Modern: *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House

In Fritz Burns's First Postwar House, designers, builders, and journalists wrestled with emerging views of modernity. Wurdeman and Becket's exterior displayed a new, modern architectural style, however regionalist or "Californian" it may have been; yet their interiors lacked any sense of modern simplicity or design consistency. While Burn's concept of livability, or comfort at an affordable price, permeated the work, a cohesive modern image failed to emerge. Yet the First Postwar House remained an informative demonstration house and a powerful advertising device. But the house was only one prototype, and its moment of impact was limited to the spring of 1946.

John Entenza's Case Study House Program, on the other hand, produced housing prototypes of remarkable influence and longevity. In 1945, Entenza, the owner, editor, and publisher of *Arts & Architecture* magazine, commissioned a select group of young architects to design a series of exhibition houses in Los Angeles (Fig. 3.1). In all, there were thirty-six projects completed between 1945 and the demise of the program in 1964. Participating architects included, among others, Richard Neutra, Julius Ralph Davidson, William Wurster, Eero Saarinen, Charles and Ray Eames, Raphael Soriano, Craig Ellwood, and Pierre Koenig. Entenza did not promote any fixed notion of architectural style, though he clearly held a strong allegiance to a domesticated International Style

(Fig. 3.2). He called for the careful consideration of form, function, space, and lifestyle, to be realized by an architecture rooted in rationality and achieved through prefabrication.

The program, at least in the early years, was guided by a Utopian spirit reminiscent of pre-war European modernism, characterized by faith in the ability of modern design to create a better world. The architectural goal was to produce modern, single-family homes that would appeal to the American middle-class, both aesthetically and economically. Though the Case Study houses were generally built on speculation, the client (real or imagined) was envisioned as the "Average American Family;" the reality was that unconventional materials and construction techniques, an austere modernist aesthetic, and a large price tag made many of these houses virtually inaccessible to the truly "average" home buyer. Yet the ideas embedded within these Case Study Houses – particularly the vision of a new modern home for a middle-class market – were timely and appealing. If the aesthetic was too radical, the message was not.

Entenza encouraged the dissemination of this architectural and social message to a broad public. As both client (or sponsor) and publicist, he had a tremendous impact. His funding assured the participation of hand-selected designers; his magazine guaranteed constant media coverage containing his approved architectural message and social agenda. From January 1945, Entenza's Case Study House Program offered one continual (if not cohesive) vision of a new direction in modern architecture (Fig. 3.3).[1]

From her post at *House Beautiful*, Elizabeth Gordon observed Entenza's serial experiment with much interest. She had already explored similar exhibition opportunities

in 1943 when she collaborated with California designer Cliff May on "Woodacres," a demonstration home in Los Angeles (Fig. 3.4; 3.5). But her coverage of Fritz Burn's First Postwar House and May's Ranch House Classic in early 1946 set an even larger project in motion. With these two examples, she presented a version of modern architecture that differed from what Entenza was simultaneously promoting. Though Gordon and Entenza were both concerned with form, function, space, lifestyle, and personal taste, Gordon wanted to reach a wide popular audience and provide information that they could easily apply, either on their own or with the aid of an architect. While Entenza claimed that the Case Study client was the "Average American Family," his efforts to reach the mainstream were frustrated by unconventional aesthetics and inflated construction costs. Gordon, on the other hand, saw a way to successfully translate progressive prototypes into houses for clients of moderate means. Because *House Beautiful*'s audience demographically represented the new middle-class housing market – more so than Entenza's audience at *Arts & Architecture* – Gordon was able to better position herself and her magazine as the true tastemaker for mainstream America. Her innovation was to combine Burns's response to consumer demands with Entenza's cohesive and controlled means of disseminating new architectural ideas.

Gordon understood that modernism needed a new marketing campaign. Modern would sell, if properly promoted. Her challenge, then, was to publicize modernism in its most palatable version. She was prepared to adjust her strategies as the housing market

and consumer tastes: her first tactic was not to sell the modern aesthetic but the modern lifestyle. For Gordon, postwar America could not just *buy* modern, it had to *be* modern.

**Cliff May and the California Ranch House**

In 1946, Gordon found the perfect designer to promote modern architecture and modern living: Cliff May (Fig. 3.6). She believed that under careful direction, May's California ranch house could transform the mass-market house into an individualized home. With May, the new postwar client would learn that a modern lifestyle could indeed generate a modern architecture, though the result would be quite different than what was currently sold as modern (the Case Study Houses in particular). May's architectural encapsulation of the *idea* of modern rather than the *image* of modern seemed the perfect campaign of compromise; for *House Beautiful,* May set the pace for the next two decades of domestic production.

A sixth-generation Californian born in 1908, May spent much of his childhood shuffling between his parent's San Diego bungalow and his grandparent's ranch near Oceanside (Fig. 3.7).[2] Both locales impacted May's design sensibility and influenced his lifestyle. As a young boy, his urban life was framed by close domestic quarters, furnished with Navajo rugs and rustic Mission furniture. This was a relatively romantic setting in comparison to the stark modernity of his playmate Robert Churchill's Irving Gill-designed home.[3] Through this friendship with Gill's client, May found himself in close contact with the architect; May's virtual apprenticeship to Gill's master craftsman, Mr.

Styrgis (who happened to be May's neighbor) further cemented the association. Gill's modern architecture, represented by his 1917 Dodge House, would long serve as a counter to the traditional aesthetic May experienced at his family's ranch (Fig. 3.8).[4] The main house, a two-story adobe Monterrey *rancho* dating to the early nineteenth century, demonstrated for May a Spanish-colonial vernacular aesthetic derived from simple solutions for enclosing space and responding to climate. May's domestic designs, produced later in his life, represented a long culmination of influences: his work was both a continuation of the regional building traditions, and a reaction to Gill's modern "boxes."[5]

With no college degree and no formal architectural training, May started his design career as a furniture maker.[6] Learning his craft in part from Strygis, May produced Mission-style pieces that sold well in San Diego. Yet he was only partially fulfilled by this craftsman's life; after his brief study of business at San Diego State College, he was drawn to the lucrative house-for-sale market.[7] Under the tutelage of builder William F. Hale, May learned to design and build homes, tackling all aspects of construction (except plumbing and electricity).

From 1932, May entered a series of partnerships with financiers and real estate developers, first in San Diego and later in Los Angeles. Between 1932 and 1937, these collaboration enabled May to complete nearly fifty homes in San Diego. In 1937, May was commissioned to build a house in Los Angeles for John A. Smith, an oil industrialist and owner of the First National Finance Corporation of Los Angeles. The success of the

project – and Smith's persuasive arguments – convinced May to seek his fortune in the booming Los Angeles housing market. Smith offered to provide May with financial backing.[8] Smith's support allowed May a great deal of flexibility, including the ability to circumvent restrictive FHA financing; with Smith's funding, May was free to build as he saw fit.

Between 1932 and 1937, May – while still based in San Diego – refined his concept of domestic architecture. Though his ideas were inherently modern, neither his philosophy nor his forms were particularly radical. Compared to more progressive modern architects such as Gill in San Diego, or Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra in Los Angeles, May's homes were aesthetically rather traditional.[9] Yet he endeavored to create modern design, though his modernism would remain rooted in the region's past traditions. His solution was a revised version of the Spanish-colonial *rancho*.

May's role in developing the twentieth-century version of the California ranch house was decisive, but other Southern California architects were simultaneously exploring the ranch house as a domestic type. May viewed Sam Hammill, Bill Mushet, Clarence Cullimore, Clarence Tantua, Joseph Plunkett, and William Bain as his nearest competitors.[10] In the San Francisco Bay area, William W. Wurster (particularly with his Gregory ranch house in Paso de Tiempo), Mario Corbett, Gardner Dailey, and the firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons worked in a similar vein (Fig. 3.9).[11] May's respect for other designers, particularly Wurster (Fig. 3.10), was evident in his appropriation of Wurster's design philosophy: "to work on direct, honest solutions, avoiding exotic

materials, using indigenous things so that there is no affection and the best is obtained for the money."[12] May's own philosophy was predicated upon the same precepts of simplicity and economics, and underscored his belief that domestic architecture should provide easy, comfortable living.[13]

May was, however, one of the few popular modernists to articulate a cohesive design philosophy and build accordingly. In 1946, May collaborated with the editors of *Sunset Magazine* to publish *Western Ranch Houses*. May possessed remarkable timing: *Western Ranch Houses* reached the American public just as wartime building restrictions and materials rationing were lifted, and just as the Cape Cod house and "modernist boxes" were pitted against one another as viable approaches to postwar modern housing. The pragmatically modern ranch house, it seemed, was a viable middle ground.[14]

In *Western Ranch Houses*, laden with illustrations and plans, May presented the public with a concise account of his design concepts. He outlined his broad conception of the ranch house as both a building type and, perhaps more importantly, an enabler of a certain type of living (Fig. 3.11). May conceded that the ranch house was difficult to define, in part because the "ranch house" label was haphazardly applied (and often mistakenly) to "almost any house that provides for an informal type of living and is not definitely marked by unmistakable style symbols."[15] In postwar America, as May recognized, "ranch house" was a catch-all architectural term. His intention was not to define a ranch house "style," but rather to elucidate its typological characteristics, inspired by "ranch-house living."[16] In *Western Ranch Houses*, May emphasized modern

lifestyle rather than architectural style, a tact that remained consistent with the message circulating in countless popular magazines and the shelter press.

Regardless of his resistance to codify a new style, May recognized that most ranch houses exhibited a family resemblance. As a domestic type, the ranch house drew from Spanish-colonial building traditions, characterized by a low silhouette, rambling "L" or "U" shaped-plan (infinitely expandable), and generous porches and patios that lent shelter and extended living-working space into the outdoors (Fig. 3.12). The use of simple, natural materials, such as wood and adobe, remained crucial to the aesthetic. Informal yet gracious, the ranch house aspired to "livable space" that fit the terrain, utilized sun and shade (outdoor living was integral part of the concept), provided privacy, incorporated landscaping (which could increase perception of space and actual usable space), and was easily expandable (thus fitting into virtually any budget).

May's motivation for writing *Western Ranch Houses* was not to claim he had invented the ranch house type, which he clearly had not done; rather, he intended to demonstrate the continued validity of a vernacular design. For May, the ranch house tradition was a timeless tradition that could be adapted to contemporary needs and resources. With the updated ranch house model, May offered a vision of modernity that embraced the idea of progress and the benefits of technology, yet did not reject architecture's past or copy historical forms.

As *Western Ranch Houses* demonstrated, May positioned himself opposite of the most powerful forces in Los Angeles modernism. He claimed to be unaware of

International Style modernism, despite the fact that he began building in 1932, the same year as the Museum of Modern Art exhibit. He read the AIA's "Houses of Tomorrow" in 1932 or 1933; still he claimed to be unaffected of developments in high-style modern architecture. At the very least, he was conscious of the various regional interpretations. His response to sober aesthetics came early in his career in the form of a reaction to Gill, and he remained critical of high style and avant-garde solutions. In short, he disapproved of "architects that go out and spend all their time making 'boxes for living' [to] look good – All Façade. No Plan. No Function. No out-of-door living."[17] May appreciated the concept of functionalism and experimented with technology, yet believed a practical house could be had without sacrificing comfort, individuality and the larger sense of livability.

Alongside operative-builders like Fritz Burns, May's highly customizable ranch house suggested yet another prototype for the postwar house (Fig. 3.12). Unlike Burns's additive approach, May's method was holistic. He simultaneously considered the architectural package, interior, furnishings, landscape, and all of the lifestyle activities that would occur in the domestic environment. It was this aspect of his design philosophy, and the tempered modern form that it generated, that immediately attracted the editors of *House Beautiful*.

Elizabeth Gordon met Cliff May shortly after she assumed editorship of *House Beautiful* in 1941.[18] May had already received some regional media attention for his "modern *rancheria*" designs, a contemporary interpretation of the adobe haciendas found

in his native region of Southern California: first by *California Arts & Architecture* in 1934 and later by *Sunset Magazine* in 1936.[19] With the construction of his Los Angeles home in 1939, *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Digest* took note. Less than a year later, *House Beautiful* became one of the first popular magazines with nationwide circulation to feature May's work.[20] Though May received great publicity through *Sunset Magazine*, he found equal and at times more comprehensive support in other periodicals, particularly in *House Beautiful*.[21] He quickly became a regular contributor, and after 1946, a consultant to the editorial staff.[22]

Building on the success of *Western Ranch Houses*, *House Beautiful* published May's own home, the "Ranch House Classic," in April 1946 (Fig. 3.13).[23] Though *Sunset* and *House Beautiful* had first introduced this house to the public in June 1944, it was this twenty-six page spread with *House Beautiful*'s "Better Your Home Better Your Living" stamp of approval that launched the house and May's career as a leading postwar designer.[24]

Recognizing the development potential of western Los Angeles, May purchased thirty-six acres off of Sunset Boulevard in 1937, shortly after he moved from San Diego.[25] This was virtually untouched country in the 1930s: even Sunset Boulevard was unpaved (Fig. 3.14).[26] May selected a one-acre lot for himself just off of Sunset at the mouth of Mandeville Canyon.[27] Though the May had only two daughters at the time, he intended the house to grow with his active family and a circle of friends.[28] The site was expansive enough to accommodate a sprawling ranch house, three separate outdoor living

spaces (patio, terrace and porch), a large motor court, a two-car garage, a tool shed and workshop, horse stables and paddock, a tack room and kennel, ping pong and tennis courts, and children's play yard complete with badminton court, swings, trapeze, and sand box (Fig. 3.15). The grounds were extensively landscaped according to landscape architect Aurele Vermuelen's plan.[29]

In architectural terms, May was inspired by the nineteenth-century *rancherias* that he had long observed; his interpretation, though rooted deeply in tradition, achieved a subtle modernity. Set back from the street and positioned beyond an entry gate, the house turned a blank façade to the public, opening inward to series of rear patios (Fig. 3.16; 3.17). The one-story house retained a long, low profile, with an exterior wall height of only seven feet and a roof pitch of 4' in 12').[30] The exterior walls, a combination of board-and-batten siding and wood framing clad in stucco, recalled Spanish and Mexican adobe building. The interior finishes, though conventional rocklath and plaster, hinted toward the same tradition (Fig. 3.18). May prioritized the use of native materials, particularly hand-split cedar shakes and interior oak flooring. He utilized contemporary materials where they were beneficial, including a concrete slab, radiant heating and steel-sash windows.[31]

One theme remained consistent throughout May's ranch house: livability. Though builders like Fritz Burns also promoted livable architecture, May's interpretation differed. Burns expressed livable in terms of the perfection of interior appointments; the result was an inharmonious joining of the latest in consumer goods with an economical if

progressively styled package. On the other hand, May viewed livable as an entire architectural concept: the sum of careful planning, advanced technology, pleasing form, and lifestyle requirements. As defined in *Western Ranch Houses* and physically realized in May's built works, his version of livability incorporated conscious siting with regard to climate, rational planning to incorporate flexible indoor-outdoor relationships, and infinite usability and expandability. Altogether, the ranch house accommodated the inhabitant's functional and aesthetics needs. These priorities guided May's design, and in his assessment, created a livable modern home.

May oriented his home for the best possible access to light, breezes, and views. He positioned directly onto the site, by means of a concrete slab-on grade foundation. This low foundation allowed the house to achieve a low-profile, and maintain an uninhibited relationship with the grounds. The house nestled into the landscape, providing shelter in both the physical and psychological sense.

To dissolve the barrier between inside and out, May installed a large wrap-around terrace. With this feature, all rooms had at least one point of access to the outdoors (Fig. 3.15). The master suite and children's bedrooms, in fact, had two points of access: each opened onto the main terrace, and to private patios on the south. Though each room opened to the outdoors, the connection between interior and exterior was restrained. Because May had limited access to large expanses of glass in 1939, he was only able to insert large, fixed "picture windows" (Fig. 3.19). Though he lacked materials to create vast window-walls, he achieved what was at the time a seamless transition between

interior and exterior spaces. With consistent orientation toward the outdoors, and utilization of terraces as secondary living spaces, May increased the feeling of spaciousness well beyond the home's already generous square footage.[32] Though May wanted to provide a sense of transparency, he did not ignore the simple need for privacy. He turned a blank façade to the public street, and shielded all of the internal private patios with extensive plantings and fencing.

May infused the house with a sense of informality and flexibility that he felt was appropriate not only to his family's lifestyle, but to that of the western United States. The house was meant to operate without servants, accomplished by means of efficient space planning, specific "engineered spaces" for storage, and labor-saving devices such as an electric dishwasher, garbage disposal, washer-and-dryer set (one of the first home units), refrigerator, and freezer.[33] The concept of informality not only included household management, but use of space. May installed multi-purpose interior rooms (including multiple dining and cooking areas), as well as multi-purpose outdoor living spaces.[34] Any conceivable activity, from movie viewing to ping pong to horseback riding, was possible at the May house.

In *Western Ranch Houses,* May wrote that adaptability was among the "major qualities of a good ranch house."[35] The ranch house was meant to change over time, to grow and adjust. May's house did just this, and was substantially remodeled in 1949 to become a true "postwar house." The largest change occurred in the expansion of glazing to provide a free and unrestricted physical relationship to the outdoors. May replaced the

original fixed windows in the living area, dining room, and master bedroom with operable sliding glass (Fig. 3.19). This change created what May described as a "living" rather than a "viewing" garden, a feature that enabled the inhabitants a "free interchange with the house." [36]

Built as the "laboratory" house for May's Riviera Ranch development, his Ranch House Classic presented his forward-looking prewar vision and the continued relevancy of his postwar ideas. His home epitomized an unpretentious approach to modern architecture, and a "thoughtfully designed way of living." [37] *House Beautiful* presented the house from May's personal viewpoint, as an "unretouched picture" of the designer, his family, the house, and the daily life it contained.[38] With May, *House Beautiful* found both the architectural framework and social content (not to mention the image of a successful professional and contented family man) to illustrate the "indispensable keys to happiness and a good life."[39] *House Beautiful*'s aim, surely in concert with May's own, was to sell a livable form of modern architecture.

May demonstrated a binary relationship between custom and mass-market housing of this period: many designers worked in both fields, and many advances first applied to the high-end custom home were often utilized, if at a more modest scale, in smaller houses for middle-income groups. May, like many of his contemporaries, was eager to find solutions that would work for both high-end custom and low-end mass markets (and everything between); yet he was particularly interested in achieving the best living environment for the least amount of money. This paralleled Gordon's and *House*

*Beautiful*'s own crusade, and this shared ideal cemented their relationship for years to come.[40]

### *House Beautiful*'s First Pace Setter House

Shortly after *House Beautiful* published May's Ranch House Classic, he began planning a new postwar ranch house. He intended to build this new house on speculation, based on conceptual drawings developed for *Western Ranch Houses* (Fig. 3.20).[41] May first approached *Sunset Magazine*, for whom he had built a corporate headquarters, to sponsor the project.[42] *Sunset* declined, claiming that "publishing was their business, not building houses."[43] Their loss was *House Beautiful*'s gain: in 1947, May took his proposal to Elizabeth Gordon. In this pivotal moment, she made it *House Beautiful*'s business to publish *and* to build houses.

Gordon recognized that May's new project, dubbed the "After the War House," set the forward pace of the postwar modern movement, but in a very different direction from that of its competitors.[44] With this acknowledgment, *House Beautiful* agreed to sponsor and exhibit May's house.[45] The magazine's 1946 coverage of May's Ranch House Classic served as the perfect prologue and prototype. With this model, May's "After the War House" was re-branded as *House Beautiful*'s first Pace Setter House (Fig. 3.21).[46]

The Pace Setter Program, conceived by Elizabeth Gordon, was intended as an annual *House Beautiful* feature in which trend-setting domestic design could be presented to the American public. At least one entire magazine issue would be devoted to the

selected designer and project. The Pace Setter house for any given year, when completed, would be photographed in full, and opened to public tours. In some cases, *House Beautiful* would provide the interior design staff to complete the house (staff member and decorator Laura Tanner was generally involved); in all cases, Gordon would oversee the interpretation of the architectural concepts. While the magazine was not able to finance the construction of the Pace Setters, Gordon convinced *House Beautiful* advertisers to provide (often at no cost) building materials, furnishings, and decorative arts objects in exchange for product placement and printed acknowledgements. The Pace Setter houses were destined to become advertisements for progressive design and domestic products.

May designed *House Beautiful*'s first Pace Setter House for an unknown client, but to standards that he imposed upon designs for his own home.[47] The Pace Setter was designed for a large lot in May's Riviera Ranch development. Built on a half-acre corner site (just around the corner from May's home), the house enclosed 4,000 square feet of living area and approximately 1,570 additional square feet of garages, porches, and patios (Fig. 3.22). This large house, with construction costs of over $50,000, was clearly aimed at the high end of upper-middle class market: it was five times the average square footage for a postwar house (1,100 square feet) and five times the median cost ($9,000).[48]

May conceived the layout as a "rambling ranch house plan," with two splayed wings that embraced an interior courtyard, garden room, and swimming pool (Fig. 3.23).[49] The plan provided six kinds of outdoor living spaces: a motor court; garden room

with “controlled weather;” swimming pool patio; bedroom patio; enclosed drying yard; and a front lawn, which was there for “convention” rather than use (Fig. 3.24).[50]

May’s Pace Setter house represented a new concept in postwar design. In this example, he not only explored the possibilities of ranch house architecture, but advanced the “full possibilities of ranch-house living.”[51] He intended to represent a new era of postwar luxury: gracious, refined, and livable. For May, this house stood as timeless, without being regressive or historicist. Like all of his previous ranch houses, the Pace Setter combined elements of Spanish-Californian residential tradition with the “amenities of modern living.”[52] This artful combination of the past with the present led decidedly, as *House Beautiful* argued, to the architecture of the future.

Livability had long been a driving principle for May. He often articulated this idea in terms of a design process in which the architect accommodated not only the natural landscape and microclimate, but whatever activities the client could envision occurring within his own “kingdom.” The livable solution was considered; it offered efficient, comfortable, and beautiful resolutions of design problems.

The Pace Setter further revealed a latent element of livability that May never quite articulated: space. He frequently summarized his work as the embodiment (or the enabler) of casual living; yet these concepts were vague. His goal of creating a livable house hinged upon his ability to dissolve architectural barriers, expanding space both outward and upward. Like Rudolf Schindler’s Kings Road House (1921) or Frank Lloyd Wright’s first Usonian houses (Jacobs House, 1936), May’s Pace Setter offered the

duality of a closed and sheltering "back" turned toward the public street, and an open and liberating "front" turned onto an internal courtyard (Fig. 3.25). The public façade of the Pace Setter presented an almost impenetrable barrier, recalling the thick adobe walls of the Spanish Missions. The internal private elevations, on the other hand, erased the notion of wall as physical boundary. May achieved transparency much as his contemporaries did, by incorporating large expanses of glass (Fig. 3.26). Movement occurred in this outward direction because of the draw of darkness to light, closed to open.

This siting method seemed to turn the traditional American home inside out, or to reverse previous conceptions of a home's front-to-back planning; yet May worked from the vernacular tradition in which this juxtaposition was a resolution of problems as much as it was a statement of design. May's statement was, therefore, both a continuation of a centuries-old tradition and a parallel to the modern work of other architects such as Schindler or Wright. Yet May produced a kind of interior upward movement achieved by few of his modern contemporaries, including Schindler at the King's Road House, and most of the Case Study House architects. For example, May refused to cap interior spaces with a flat ceiling; rather he allowed the interior to follow the shallow pitch of the exterior roof line. The simple suggestion of upward and diagonal movement lent May's interior spaces an inner dynamism that although subtle, was effective.

By conceiving living space as simultaneously indoor and outdoor, May extended the house's boundaries even further. He removed the sense of permanent enclosure by attaching outdoor living spaces (patios and porches) along the perimeter of the house. To

make these outdoor spaces inhabitable and usable, he offered the protection of porches, sky shades and wind shutters.[53] The sky shade, a movable canvas hung on piano wires over the courtyard area, shaded the courtyard served as heat-blanket in cool temperatures (Fig. 3.27). May offered another protective device in the form of wind shutters that hinged at the top. Suspended in this way, the shutters acted as both an awning when propped up, and a dividing screen between the pool and garden room when lowered. With the aid of sophisticated systems of "weather control," outdoor courtyards functioned extended living spaces in several seasons (Fig. 3.25; 3.26; 3.27).[54]

The features and qualities that made this house a Pace Setter, the first in the series, revolved around careful design solutions. These addressed contemporary problems and embraced an informal and understated view of life. May's designs epitomized this progressive attitude. While other designers created imposing façades (in part an indicator of wealth, social stature, and taste), he instilled a different value system. As *House Beautiful* wrote, the impressive and often historical revival facades had no guarantee of good living, and perhaps money was best spent on "interior benefits" such as those May provided. The magazine's view represented a change in values, an expressed preference for "new houses that are palatial inside [but] look non-committal on the outside, and anything but show."[55]

May responded to this notion of prioritizing interior spaces. He designed the Pace Setter, and most of his subsequent ranch houses, so that it turned away from the city street to embrace the private zone, the heart of family activity.[56] This fundamentally

changed the tradition of house building: front porches and large front "picture" windows all but disappeared, replaced by blank façades with little in the way of penetration. Very similar in concept to Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, May sought to bring this design strategy into the realm of mass housing. He further made use of setbacks, garden walls, and planting to achieve secluded effects. Though the rear of the house was completely transparent, May still provided for privacy on a city lot. Privacy, otherwise interpreted as a physical and psychological comfort that enabled one to be at ease and relaxed at home, was a very important component of livability.

May's careful planning extended to his interior spaces. As he was always conscious of comfort, he employed a method of zoned planning to be sure that all the inhabitants' needs were successfully and efficiently met. The division of the house into private and public spaces was not a new idea, yet the rambling dispensation of interior rooms was exaggerated in the Pace Setter. May's planning indicates a trend to isolate the private, or quiet, spaces from the public or "active" zones. In some cases, this meant separating not only sleeping quarters from living quarters, but the master suite (a new addition in the middle class home) from children's sleeping areas and playrooms.[57] The "work" zone, contained the kitchen, laundry facility, storage and a maid's quarter, was completely removed from the more leisured areas of the house.[58]

The interior decoration of the Pace Setter House underscored an important theme in May's work. While the Pace Setter, particularly as staged for the *House Beautiful* photography shoot, lacked the clean lines of Paul T. Frankl's interiors for May's Ranch

House Classic (as photographed in 1946), it retained an understated modernity (Fig. 3.28; 3.29; 3.30; 3.31). The Pace Setter's underlying rationality, combined with a flexibility of space, was never threatened by May's choice to retain historical themes.[59] For example, to emphasize the Pace Setter's ties to California vernacular traditions, he chose a set of sixteenth-century Spanish motifs; all decorative details and patterns were derived from this source. May successfully blended the past and the present, creating a modern design that was at once familiar, and forward-looking.

The impact of May's Pace Setter House was magnified as it went on public display during October and November 1948. For this first grand opening, Elizabeth Gordon hosted a series of three large "open house" parties: the first night was for the press, the next night was for those who contributed to the project. Edward Wormly, T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings and other noted designers were in attendance. The third and final party was a social event for the "society" of Los Angeles (who May certainly hoped would become clients).[60] In response to the large demand for public tours, *House Beautiful* opened the Pace Setter to exhibition, with all admission proceeds donated directly to charity.[61] The house was open daily, and was offered for sale.[62]

The publication of the Pace Setter 1948 was a pivotal point in May's career. Over one million people viewed the house either in person or in the pages of the magazine. May subsequently received hundreds of letters from across the nation inquiring about his ranch house designs, and his ability to provide his services.[63] May's popularity as a designer was significantly impacted by this constant publicity; with Gordon's aid, he

began to disseminate the ranch house idea – what came to be recognized as the "California style" – to all parts of the United States and abroad. Over the course of the next two decades, he built nine derivatives of the first Pace Setter, none of which were identical.[64] Just as House Beautiful predicted, May proved that "the principles of this Pace-Setter House apply to houses in all cost brackets, and in all climates. For these ideas are basic to good living in America in this Twentieth Century."[65]

May's California ranch houses represented an effort to transform architecture for the average into more than just average architecture. He sought to individualize his homes, even when building for the mass market. May viewed his designs as suited to a Western climate and Western mindset; yet as *House Beautiful* spread the ideas eastward, May and an entire generation of rising architects began to see beyond the region that had inspired his signature form.

**The Second Pace Setter: Better Living in Any Climate**

Gordon quickly recognized an opportunity to transform May's California-based designs into a nationally viable architecture. *House Beautiful*'s second Pace Setter, designed by New Jersey architect Emil Schmidlin in 1949, explored notions of better living outside the mild and informal climate of the American West (Fig. 3.32; 3.33). Schmidlin's Pace Setter was an attempt to integrate west-coast design methods into the eastern academy while upholding *House Beautiful*'s standards of modern performance, comfort and beauty.

While *House Beautiful*'s first two Pace Setters shared the same architectural tradition, Schmidlin and May came from very different professional backgrounds. Born in Switzerland in 1906, Schmidlin was educated at Columbia University (1923-27) and the Beaux-Arts Institute of New York (1928-32). Unlike the autodidactic May, Schmidlin was a licensed architect and a member of the American Association of Architects (AIA). Despite his classical training, Schmidlin was eager to explore alternatives to both the academism and the avant-garde that permeated the east-coast architectural scene in the postwar years.

Schmidlin's Pace Setter was opened for exhibition in Orange, New Jersey in November 1949.[66] Clearly referencing May's western ranch houses, Schmidlin anchored his low-pitched design with native stone and a massive fireplace (Fig. 3.34). His main emphasis, and that of the *House Beautiful*'s coverage, was on the principles that drove the design. Whereas May's 1948 Pace Setter considered the house as an enabler of a better (and more modern) life, the 1949 Pace Setter focused on better living through control of climate. May certainly addressed similar issues, though, in Los Angeles, he faced fewer climatic extremes. Like May, Schmidlin gave a great deal of attention to features that provided for comfortable living indoors and outdoors, such as appropriate siting and shading mechanisms. Schmidlin's careful attention to regional climate demonstrated that the sort of informal, outdoor California living that was becoming more closely associated with postwar modern lifestyle was indeed achievable outside of the temperate western climates (Fig. 3.35; 3.36).

*House Beautiful* provided Schmidlin, and architects throughout the United States, with extensive climate data that guided his creation of the Pace Setter for 1949.[67] Gordon launched *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control Program in 1947, and after over two years of climate research, began to publish data related to various climatological regions throughout the country.[68] The ability to understand and eventually control climate was a key component *House Beautiful*'s idea of livable architecture; as such, climate control became a constant theme each subsequent Pace Setter House beginning with the 1949 model. Schmidlin's Pace Setter employed specific architectural solutions that allowed May's California lifestyle and ranch-type architecture to move east, particularly "winter-proof" glass walls, and sun control.[69] These were prominent in the Pace Setter's Great Room, a "new kind of informal living room, designed for year-round entertaining" (Fig. 3.37; 3.38).[70] The inclusion of solar windows, a bank of glazing designed to exclude midday summer sun and capture the heat and light in December, was crucial to the Pace Setter's year-round livability. The window-wall achieved further flexibility with integrated screens that could be rolled out of the transom bars to convert the room into a screened-in summer porch. Schmidlin incorporated a secondary element, a roof overhang and canvas awning or "eyebrow," that both provided shade in the summer and allowed the winter sun to penetrate and warm the interior (Fig. 3.39).[71] Cross-ventilation was likewise a large concern, particularly in New Jersey's humid summer months, and the architect was careful to place openings in opposite walls of the great room. Cool air, forced heat and in-floor radiant heating further served to make the Pace Setter

comfortable in all seasons. The adjacent terrace, advertised as an outdoor living room, provided a logical extension of living space, which Schmidlin and magazine claimed could be used "three seasons out of four."[72] The design of the entire house revolved around a large beech tree that provided both ambiance and much-needed shade (Fig. 3.36).

Schmidlin's Pace Setter made a grand statement about the flexibility of the California ranch house, a trend that many critics had derided as a strictly regional. Though the exterior aesthetic would have merged quietly into any neighborhood in Los Angeles, the Pace Setter 1949 was unique (and remains so today) in its suburban New Jersey environment. Yet through extensive efforts to control the microclimate, Schmidlin proved that this rather unorthodox modern architecture could become a comfortable domestic environment in any locale.

The first two Pace Setter Houses, constructed in 1948 and 1949, demonstrated the vitality and nationwide viability of the California ranch house. Under the skill of May and Schmidlin, the ranch house emerged as a seamless fusion of past traditions, contemporary technologies, and consumer desires. May sought ways to individualize for the mass market; Schmidlin adapted the outdoor-oriented plan and building envelope to colder climates and tighter urban settings. By exhibiting such architecture to the public, through both the magazine and open houses, *House Beautiful* began to influence mainstream ideas about what modern could mean and what modern design could achieve in terms of livability. The house as expression of the individual consumer (rather than the

architect) was nonetheless still difficult to achieve; in most cases, it was left to the creative will of the interior designer or the family who would inhabit the home. Gordon clearly saw the value of linking architecture to the individual; but by 1950, she began to connect architecture to a national style.

## Chapter IV: The American Style

> *A new way of living has gradually come into being in America. It is casual, informal- the opposite of stuffy. It could only have happened in a democracy – where everybody is somebody.*[1]

In 1946, Elizabeth Gordon identified a new spirit and "new look" in American domestic architecture. With Fritz Burns, she labeled it "postwar;" with Cliff May, she called it "livable." In 1950, she re-named it "the American Style" (Fig. 4.1; 4.2).[2] Though it synthesized many high-style designs, the American Style had distinct "grass-roots" origins. Its manifestation varied from "region to region, from social group to social group."[3] By 1950, as Gordon announced its maturation, the American Style emerged within the pages of *House Beautiful* as a cohesive if not homogenous national aesthetic, and an exportable American modernism.

For Gordon, the American Style represented the contemporary incarnation of modern architecture, continuing a lineage that extended from the last decades of the nineteenth century. Based upon the work of H.H. Richardson, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Greene brothers, the new American Style offered a critique of historicism without rejecting the validity of architectural heritage.[4] The nexus of postwar American Style was not the east coast of Richardson or the middle west of Wright, but the booming Pacific

coast region with Southern California at its epicenter. James Marston Fitch, writing for *House Beautiful*, established a clear link between the great American pioneers of modernism, the "rediscovery of Oriental art and architecture," and the architects of the new American Style.[5] Fitch, like Lewis Mumford, viewed the psychology of the American West, with its "rugged, pioneering…. individualistic spirit," as a clear inspiration for a new architecture.[6] Driven by necessity and inspired by informality, architects practicing in the American west were among the first to escape both the academicism of the eastern seaboard and the cultural authority of Europe. Fitch, along with the *House Beautiful*, recognized that the American Style borrowed from an orthodox modernist lineage, but believed that at the height of its development, the American Style would be "freed…from the burden of having to use borrowed forms."[7]

Though Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies may have "enriched" American architecture, as Fitch argued, a long period of selection and adaptation followed their initial impact. Several decades and a world war allowed the American Style to develop as the cultural and political antithesis of European modernism of the 1920s and 1930s. Yet the American Style's nemesis was not just European modernism, but specifically Henry-Russell Hitchcock's and Philip Johnson's International Style, as codified by the Museum of Modern Art exhibition of 1932. The American Style was native, regional, and humanistic; the International Style was imported, generic and austere. Though criticized by many "card-carrying Modernists" (such as Hitchcock, Johnson, Alfred Barr, and Peter Blake) as romantic and "ordinary," the new American Style was neither.[8] It was, in the

view of its proponents at *House Beautiful*, a "common-sense" modern architecture that evolved from a uniquely American way of life.

This way of life, this postwar lifestyle – literally and symbolically represented by the American station wagon – was modern, independent, and family-oriented (Fig. 4.3).[9] The new way of life embraced informal, yet gracious living implicitly filled with leisure. It was defined, particularly by *House Beautiful*, by the luxury of space, freedom from constraint, and freedom from care. American domestic life was easy, casual, and filled with family. Inspired by the suburban boom and a romanticized view of California living, "easy" not only referred to American character, but to a simple life free from pretension. It meant the ease of maintenance, through the use of durable, cleanable, and flexible materials. It meant saving time through the reduction of clutter and the increase of organization. The easy life required "engineered" storage, labor-saving appliances and electronics, specifically high-fidelity sound equipment and the television set (Fig. 4.4). "Casual" was a social attitude, translated architecturally into the informal arrangement of floor plans. Informal spaces offered freedom from constraint, achieved primarily through the elimination of single-purpose spaces. The formal, separate dining room disappeared, and the family rumpus room took its place. "Family life" merged activities – under a parent's watchful eye – into a public zone, with the needs of children incorporated into the home's architectural program (Fig. 4.5; Fig. 4.6). The growing intimacy between buildings and landscape encouraged indoor-outdoor living, but privacy was retained at all costs. In design terms, the private backyard patio became the new heart of postwar house.

(Fig. 4.7). All in all, the emerging American lifestyle was intended to direct an architecture of democracy, where "everyman" had access to good design and could participate in the process of making their own homes. In this new model, the consumer was "King." The postwar American lifestyle and by extension, postwar domestic architecture, were shaped by a new power group. In this model of architectural influence, the "*People*," "by spending their money on what they like…[accepted or rejected] the experimental efforts of designers."[10]

The "people," meaning both the individual consumer and the American family unit, drove the creation and success of the new American Style. Gordon, inspired by the philosopher Ralph Barton Perry, recognized that a very specific set of ideas and values defined the postwar domestic environment.[11] In *Characteristically American* (1949), Perry had argued that the core of American character was in fact individualism. Individuality, in his view, did not point to selfish singularity, but rather to a "collective individualism."[12] Collective could have been a dangerous term to use in the heated political climate of 1949, but Perry was careful to define collective not as a group mentality resulting from corporate, institutional or governmental control, but rather as the "manyness of distinct individuals" in social cooperation.[13]

Gordon believed that if, as Perry argued, the American cast of mind was individualist and like no other, then the development of a characteristically American architecture was not only justified but inevitable.[14] With individualism as a core value, the concept of a democratic architecture became compelling for *House Beautiful*.

Democracy in design referenced both the freedom to choose (and convince others of the rightness of one's choice), and the freedom to participate in the process. *House Beautiful*'s belief in the power of the informed consumer to influence architecture, paired with the Perry's democratic ideal of "leveling up" (the raising of living standards and design standards from the bottom upward) were essential for the future of the American Style.[15] Democratic design, embodied within the American Style, would not forfeit quality, but rather reduce expense and cut the nonessentials. Yet American design was still in many ways an amalgam. It had long been the fusion of many architectural traditions; but, as *House Beautiful* argued, by 1950, American designers were gaining a certain amount of independence and "self-confidence."[16] In the wake of this revelation, *House Beautiful* adapted Perry's arguments to the cause of American design:

> we select and reject, and the things we select we modify. We may borrow a line or a motif or even a whole design, but we discard the rest. We adapt our borrowings to our own purposes. We simplify them. We make them more comfortable, more convenient, and easier to care for. Some things we make more informal, others, more elegant. We judge their performance, not by intellectual theories, but according to common sense. The emerging American taste is for simplified things that work. [17]

The emphasis on simplicity and functionality was palpable. Neither implied the machined functionalism of European modernism, but rather a more fundamental understanding of functionality as that which works. The stress on performance over intellectual theory

underscored a growing anti-intellectual sentiment common within the architectural community in the 1950s. *House Beautiful*, like the many postwar designers it published, sought to bring modern ideas and a contemporary esthetic to the mainstream without burdening the populace with esoteric theories. The age of avant-garde manifestos was over. The contemporary concern was to build according to straightforward principles and common sense.[18]

By linking architecture to the broader cultural phenomenon of individualism, *House Beautiful* pursued the belief that "all styles are social manifestations."[19] The emergence of a national style of architecture, then, would necessarily follow a period of "social maturity."[20] Gordon, bolstered by an army of cultural critics like Perry, firmly believed that the United States was approaching this maturity. Distinct American art forms, such as the New York School's Abstract Expression, were beginning to emerge; new forms of architecture were soon to follow. This, as Gordon argued, could only occur after "a new nation stops being timid, apologetic, and imitative."[21] As the United States grew in economic and political power, it faced competition on all fronts; the assertion of cultural independence became a national concern. Gordon and her staff participated in a sophisticated exploration of cultural developments, addressing larger issues than typically covered by women's journals and shelter magazines. Without implying elite intellectualism, Gordon critically positioned her editorial policy and politics to this end. She not only commissioned essays by figures like Perry, but recommended that *House Beautiful* readers familiarize themselves with most important thinkers of the day,

including among others: Dr. Ralph Linton, Professor of Anthropology at Yale University; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., social critic and Professor of History at Harvard; Sigfried Giedion; and Lewis Mumford.[22]

Gordon announced the birth of the new American Style in May 1950.[23] In a brief essay, she defined its recognizable characteristics, and hoped to provide an architectural parallel to contemporary cultural and social trends. To provide a tool for classification and a guide for future building, Gordon provided a succinct list of definitive principles. This list read almost as a "greatest hits" of modern architectural theory, though with a particular (if unacknowledged) organic inflection. In "How to Recognize the American Style," Gordon provided nine points of recognition (Fig. 4.8).[24] First, the American Style should be "fitted to its purpose" and its site. Second, the American Style should use materials honestly and according to their nature. Common materials were particularly desirable, such as wood, stucco brick, and stone. The best choices were local, inexpensive, and would weather well. Just as materials were to be used honestly, structure was to be expressed frankly. Inherent natural beauty was prized, particularly for its ability to lend visual stimulation in the form of texture and shadow. The result was an apt illustration of the third tenet, an integrated rather than superfluous ornament. The growing influence of naturalism was readily apparent in the American Style, if only in the identification of a taste for earth-toned colors, naturalistic patterns, textures, and materials, or in the careful insertion of the house into a natural landscape (Fig. 4.9).[25] The fourth and fifth points combined to demonstrate the American Style recalled the past, but

in a "modified, simplified" manner.[26] The incorporation of familiar architectural styles, even Cape Cod or Spanish Colonial, linked the postwar style to its prototypes, particularly to the lineage of American architects such as H.H. Richardson and Frank Lloyd Wright. The sixth point emphasized the place of advancing technologies in making "things perform better, wear longer, require less upkeep."[27] Technology was most readily applied in the domestic interior, in the form of appliances, gadgetry, new maintenance-free materials, heating, ventilation and solar shading. Predictably, the American Style adeptly accommodated the most influential technology of the twentieth century: the automobile. By incorporating car ports and garages, the American Style was very much in synchronization with the latest consumer enthusiasms. The seventh tenet proclaimed that American Style, as a variant of modern architecture, should in no way imitate European styles. This native brand of modern, to make the eighth point, would appeal to the American value of practicality and common sense over "intellectual stunts or tricks."[28] And finally, in the American Style, Gordon argued that beauty and utility remained "indivisible."[29]

After 1950, Gordon's definition of American Style became the foundation for *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House program. The idea and tenets were applied to nearly every home published in the magazine for the next two decades. The American Style, as codified by Gordon, represented a new direction in modern domestic architecture. The ideas and the aesthetic were not new, nor were the architectural formulations revolutionary. Yet the American Style was intended to be broadly applicable, across the

demographic and geographic span of the average American home-buyer. In Gordon's assessment America's new style of modern architecture, much like the American station wagon, was "less formal and less self-conscious, and freer to do what needs to be done."[30]

**Three Pace Setters for 1950**

In the summer of 1950, one month after introducing the American Style, *House Beautiful* announced three new Pace Setter houses (Fig. 4.10). Constructed by merchant builder David D. Bohannon, the 1950 Pace Setters were model homes intended to sell his latest tract development in northern California.[31] In the pages of *House Beautiful*, the three houses exhibited three versions of the American Style. Bohannon's approach to domestic architecture, refined during his activities as a defense builder during World War II, was to provide the best design at the best price. Certainly this appealed to Elizabeth Gordon, whose *More House for Your Money* still guided the magazine's editorial position. Though the American Style was *House Beautiful*'s primary concern in 1950, Bohannon's own agenda slightly shifted the direction of reporting. Unlike May's 1948 Pace Setter, *House Beautiful* did not control the production and marketing of these three homes. This remained the purview of Bohannon and his supervising architect Edwin Wadsworth.[32] Regardless of *House Beautiful*'s secondary role, the three model homes promoted the American Style, and continued the magazine's themes of livability and climate control.[33]

Bohannon's first Pace Setter for 1950, designed by Edwin A. Wadsworth in association with Germano A. Milano, exemplified several key tenets of the American Style.[34] Stylistically and functionally, it represented "California-type living" on a small lot and on a small budget (Fig. 4.11).[35] Wadsworth prioritized comfort and convenience, the hallmark of "good design."[36] Though he employed traditional architectural references, such as a pitched roof and masonry fireplace core, the first Pace Setter for 1950 was slimmed down, simple, and unadorned. Rather than roofing the house with a typical front-facing gable, Wadsworth set two low-pitched roofs in juxtaposition, lending visual interest to an otherwise simple façade. Like the previous Pace Setter Houses, Wadsworth's example featured a U-shaped plan that wrapped around a patio (Fig. 4.12). Entry was gained through a covered patio that doubly functioned as a carport, simultaneously lending primacy to the automobile and shielding the primary entrance from public view. Wadsworth's interior spaces were characterized by an open public zone and a compactly-planned private zone. The double-height living room – with its fireplace core, heightened ceilings and exposed rafter – added a sense of visual spaciousness.

Functionally, Wadsworth addressed the consumer desire for domestic performance and the "luxury of conveniences."[37] He used technology without adopting a machine aesthetic, so that functional features were "inconspicuous if not actually hidden from casual view."[38] His engineered built-ins made "orderliness almost automatic," and showcased a collection of appliances, fittings and furnishings that exhibited the latest in

ease of use, durability, and practicality.[39] Wadsworth's designs were straightforward, and, as was appropriate for *House Beautiful*'s concept of the American Style, avoided "tacked-on ornament."[40]

A major directive with each of the 1950 Pace Setters was to provide better living through climate control, which in Wadsworth's models was achieved primarily through wind control. Bohannon hired landscape architect Thomas Church to collaborate, ensuring that exterior spaces were planned as thoroughly as the interior. Church, like Wadsworth, created a design that was "easy to look at, easy to maintain, pleasant to live in."[41]

Bohannon's second Pace Setter for 1950, designed by Edwin Wadsworth and Marcus Stedman, similarly focused on economical design (Fig. 4.13).[42] Adjacent to Wadsworth's first Pace Setter, this second home displayed unusual quality and livability for a developer-built house. *House Beautiful* wrote that in this small home, visitors encountered the "looks, privacy, comfort and amenities of an estate."[43] The magazine, and Bohannon, intended to demonstrate that fine housing was within the reach of the average buyer who understood design priorities and good value.[44] The value in this house, much like the other two Pace Setters of the same year, was concentrated on "the BIG THREE: Climate Control, Privacy and unpretentious hospitality that is characteristic of the emerging American Style."[45] Climate control mechanisms were kept simple, and focused on good siting with regard to sun and wind-free zones. Interior design and fittings were geared toward "casual good looks and easy maintenance."[46]

The third Pace Setter for 1950 from Bohannon, with Edwin Wadsworth as the assisting designer, was described by *House Beautiful* as the more "cautious" of the three (Fig. 4.14).[47] While the home exemplified the "big three" concerns of 1950 – climate control, privacy and the American Style – it represented "change tempered with tradition"[48] Wadsworth applied "familiar" exterior styling, for those of Bohannon's buyers who might "prefer the new and the different in smaller, less startling doses."[49] The third Pace Setter included postwar innovations packaged in a "conventional frame."[50] Overall, the home was to be understood as modern, yet traditional with elements of past and present merged.

While Elizabeth Gordon clearly articulated the principles of the American Style, the three Pace Setters for 1950 offered a tentative expression. They were closer in spirit to the developer houses of 1946, as exemplified by Fritz Burn's First Postwar House, with its emphasis on economical solutions to consumer concerns. Though the Pace Setters for 1950 were attentive to climate control and proper site planning, there was little sense of the environmental fitness that Gordon espoused elsewhere. Bohannon's architects used natural materials, predominantly wood and brick, but these were employed in a conventional manner that conveyed little of their natural qualities or capacity to endow architecture with artistic beauty. The Pace Setters for 1950 were, however, successful in their incorporation of the latest building methods, consumer technologies, and their overall concern for utilitarian "common sense." *House Beautiful* chose these three Pace Setters to represent the first phases of the American Style because

they each embraced a multiplicity of demands, from environmental sensitivity to the fusion of utility and beauty. As early examples of the American Style, the Pace Setters for 1950 illustrated that domestic architecture was indeed an evolving art; subsequent Pace Setters would explore and expand the limits of the American Style house.

**The Pace Setter House for 1951: Technological Explorations**

Julius Gregory's Pace Setter for 1951 represented yet another stage in the evolution of the American Style (Fig, 4.15).[51] The theme for this house in Dobbs Ferry, New York, just a few blocks from Elizabeth Gordon's own home, was the fulfillment of technological promise.[52] Formally, the Pace Setter carried on the tradition of Cliff May's California ranch houses: the low-profile roofline, U-shaped plan, fireplace core, and sheltered patio were all intact. Spatially, this small house attempted to free itself from a conventional and restricted plan; it was however, mostly unsuccessful. Gregory attempted May's strategy of interior pitched ceilings (with exposed rafters) and window-walls opening onto the patio, but failed to dematerialize any barriers. The interior was instead confined, hemmed by a dominant blue-tile fireplace and warren of small, compartmentalized rooms. The space within, to use Frank Lloyd Wright's phrase, remained frozen.

The innovation in Gregory's Pace Setter, however, was in the utilization of technology: climate control through radiant heating (Fig. 4.16). The architect installed heating coils in the floors and ceilings, mechanisms that ensured stable temperatures

year-round. The Pace Setter, though spatially modest, functioned or "performed" well. The emphasis on emerging technologies underscored the growing benefit of American plenty, here, in terms of heating and cooling technology made affordable for the average consumer.

The Pace Setter's dominant decorative motif, the sheaf of wheat, represented this theme (Fig. 4.17). Though not fully integrated into the design and ornamental scheme as the American Style philosophy encouraged, the sheaf of wheat emblem was chosen for its symbolism and origin as a "completely American design idiom."[53]

The four Pace Setter Houses constructed between 1950 and 1951, while not stunning architectural masterworks, were crucial in understanding the forces that shaped the postwar house. These four examples demonstrated a continued emphasis on "modern, but not extreme modern."[54] The Pace Setters for these years were designed for performance, with the "beauty of appropriateness, the beauty that springs up inevitably when something does well what it is supposed to do."[55] These architects of these houses were concerned with up-to-date functionality, materials, and technology. Undoubtedly advanced in technical terms, the Pace Setters were aesthetically subtle. The designers' hesitancy to explore innovative modern forms indicated that taste, in the visual sense, remained remarkably conservative, if only to maintain the façade of architectural conformity. Certainly, new and "modern" features were incorporated, but the dominant architectural elements – the fireplace, pitched roof, and projecting eaves – had a long and accepted history in American domestic dwellings. Regardless, each of these Pace Setters

represented the sentiment of the new American Style, which, as *House Beautiful* argued, "stress[ed] human values."[56] The values in 1950 and 1951 were focused on comfort and convenience, as experienced by the user. Developers such as David Bohannon and architects such as Julius Gregory clearly prioritized contemporary desires for utility, and de-emphasized stylistic innovation. Their attitudes, shared by many of their colleagues and competitors, had a profound impact on American domestic architecture, particularly in the middle-income market.[57] Subsequently, *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter Houses confirmed that while the Pace Setters for 1950 and 1951 were the ideal representatives of their place in the architectural continuum, they signaled the conclusion of one step in the evolution of the postwar house. These four Pace Setters represented the developer-built, technologically-driven homes of the early 1950s. Just as these homes were published, a new set of concerns emerged.

**Naturalism and the American Style**

Though the Pace Setters for 1950 and 1951 had yet to reveal a deep reverence for nature, naturalism as philosophy was imbedded within the principles of the American Style.[58] In its early connotations, particularly in the realm of interior décor, naturalism referred to a taste for naturalistic colors, patterns, textures, and materials (Fig. 4.9).[59] Natural color palettes were muted, inspired by trees, plants, rocks, and soils; intense "non-natural" hues were avoided. Patterns, particularly in fabrics or wallpapers, were derived directly from natural forms, such as leaves and flowers. Just as architects had

successfully introduced texture to the domestic exterior through wood and stone, interior decorators applied similar techniques. If natural materials were not used, they were simulated; the coarseness of wood, stone, bark, or other natural elements inspired fabrics, wallpapers, floor coverings, and furnishings. For those designers who sought a more sophisticated engagement with nature as a design source, the texture and pattern found in natural materials could be transformed into architectural ornament.[60] *House Beautiful* attributed the "popularity of nature" in decoration to a deep psychological need to integrate realistic, natural forms (if only a house plant), and to counter the abstract machine forms popularized by modernism in the 1920s and 1930s. The concept of naturalism had not yet taken on the deeper structural, functional or philosophical meaning of organic design, though in this forum in 1950, naturalism certainly began to point the way.

Improvements in technology greatly impacted the American taste for the natural. With devices to control indoor climate, and new ways to "improve" the natural environment to better suit the human inhabitant (rather than force the human to adapt), taste began to shift. By the 1950s, nature could be integrated, but safely controlled.[61] Architects were increasingly able to provide a more intimate connection to nature. The natural environment, a wooded ravine or waterfall for example, was an increasingly desirable backdrop for architecture. Nature also became the foreground for architecture: uninterrupted walls of glass visually admitted the outside in, through a device that Frank Lloyd Wright described as the vanishing wall.[62] If the American home was becoming

more imbedded into the landscape, naturalistic colors and textures amplified this harmony.

Naturalism, in these terms, did not mean "back to nature." Certainly, the aesthetic of naturalism had been derided as "woodsy," as rustic, and romantic by the most noted scholars and critics of modern architecture, including Henry-Russell Hitchcock.[63] Naturalism did emphasize natural materials and textures, but in this context, it possessed a deeper meaning. This more sophisticated interpretation of naturalism encompassed three components: the integration of architecture with the natural environment; the natural evolution of forms and structure according to their function; and the expression of innate nature, or "the innate character of anything or everything."[64] The new meaning of naturalism – particularly the meaning espoused by *House Beautiful* -- was clearly tending toward the organic.

Though *House Beautiful* had previously hesitated to link naturalism to organic design, much to the chagrin of Frank Lloyd Wright, by 1951 the connection was unmistakable. Perhaps Wright's direct protest influenced the fusion: he wrote Gordon directly in 1950 to protest her definition of naturalism in which he felt she "falsified the nature of organic architecture" and more to the point, excluded him.[65] Following the direct encouragement from Wright, Gordon defined organic – as an amplification of naturalism – for the *House Beautiful* audience for the first time. Organic design, she wrote, was "a form which expresses the innate character of the thing. It results when all the elements of an object integrate completely into one whole."[66] Organic also included

the derivation of form, color, and texture from its inherent materials, without applied ornament or concealing finishes, and with no attempt to make the material look like something it was not.[67] Gordon listed as exemplars of organic design the steel bridges, the Windsor chair, and the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. She qualified all of these as organic because their forms, colors, and textures were derived from structural solutions.[68] The objective of organic design, as Gordon understood it, was to produce "beauty -- simple, honest, straightforward, functional beauty."[69] She further posited that organic design, with these goals, was indeed modern and applicable to mid-twentieth century domestic design. The growing presence of Wright within the pages of the magazine – not as a personal force, but as a benchmark or shadow figure meant to inspire other architects and consumers – firmly positioned him alongside Richardson, Sullivan, and Greene and Greene as the progenitors of the American Style. It was at this moment, in late 1951, that architectural definitions, terms, and lineage began to inform the kind of architecture that *House Beautiful* chose to promote.

Though not chosen as a Pace Setter House, Anshen & Allen's Sonya Silverstone House (1949) was perhaps the best representative of the shifting concerns of the American Style – and of *House Beautiful*'s shifting editorial policies. Whereas the Pace Setters for 1950 and 1951 were focused on domestic performance and climate control, the Silverstone House had naturalism, and by extension, organic architecture, as its dominant theme (Fig. 4.18; 4.19). With this example, *House Beautiful* began to emphasize the artistic potential of domestic architecture. As the winners of an AIA Honor Award of

Merit in 1951, Anshen & Allen emphasized the value of architecture as art, imparting "that sense of exhilaration, of satisfaction about and beyond the everyday experience."[70] Though the Silverstone house was built in Mexico, and made a clear reference Le Corbusier, whom Gordon would vilify just a few years later, it aptly represented the widespread vitality of *House Beautiful*'s newly established principles of the American Style.

Sonya Silverstone required a specific program: a casual vacation home suited to a warm climate. She wanted a large open space, linked to the outdoors, with only the kitchen and two bedrooms partitioned (Fig. 4.20). All of the rooms needed access to the surrounding patios, in a near seamless integration of interior and exterior. The architects met these challenges. They further reduced the feeling of enclosure by opening the apex of the pitched roof to the sky, creating a spine of light along the length of the house (Fig. 4.18; 4.20; 4.21).

Anshen & Allen were challenged by a difficult site: a long, narrow valley and bisecting waterfall. They responded by orienting the house parallel to the valley, and alongside the stream and waterfall. These topographical restrictions provided a visual counter to the house, and augmented the connection of the house with the land. Given such a pristine natural setting, the architects made a concerted effort to remove any architectural barriers between the exterior and interior of the home, uniting the two both visually and physically. As such, the house adhered to the first principle of the American Style: fitness to purpose and site.

To demonstrate the indivisibility of beauty and utility, Anshen & Allen employed a "sculptural" structural system. In the Silverstone house, the roof was supported by two rows of stone piers that carried the "flying wing" rafters (Fig. 4.21). The function of the concrete rafters and the load-bearing masonry walls were clear. The materials were chosen according to both their capabilities and their aesthetic value. Thus, the beauty of sculpture and utility of structure were effortlessly combined.[71]

The Silverstone house was dominated by one theme: simplicity. In this solitary goal, it best represented principles of the American Style, and the relationship of these principles to Wright's theory of organic design. The house was designed on a module that guided the formation of the home's structural system, walls, roof, and interior finishes. The architects used structure frankly, as seen in the simple forms exposed as both the frame and the form of the interior spaces. They used materials such as stone, wood, and concrete according to their purpose and their inherent beauty. The house, artfully executed, encouraged the viewer to "forget the distinctions between 'fine' or 'common' materials. If they suit your purpose and please your eye, use them."[72] Anshen & Allen chose these natural materials not just for their pure economic or aesthetic value, but for their ability to complement the landscape and encourage low maintenance. This underscored the theme of simplicity in design (particularly with the limitation on the number of rooms), in construction, in maintenance, and in decoration. The architects employed repetition of certain elements and themes; the cantilevered roof rafters were a particularly "powerful design tool" (Fig. 4.21; 4.22).[73] Through repetition, they

established a basic rhythm, underscored by contrasts: fill and void; natural and manmade materials; old and new (ancient masonry techniques blended with reinforced concrete); hand-made and machine-made (tile and polished plate glass). The contrast in form and materials naturally created the ornamental pattern, shown in the pierced wall screens. This was demonstrative of integrated, organic design, where the dominant "design motif [was] set by rhythmic structural system."[74]

With the Silverstone house as a prominent ambassador, Gordon's nine points of the American Style became the foundation for House Beautiful's next generation of Pace Setter houses. With the American Style as a guiding force, Gordon gave primacy to both livability (comfort, convenience, flexibility, and affordability); by 1951, livability began to incorporate themes of naturalism, and significantly, Gordon began to link livability directly to organic design.

The terminology that Gordon chose was significant for defining a conceptual framework of architecture in these years; yet the physical aspects of design remained the emphasis of the Pace Setter program. On all scales and within all budgets, the Pace Setters built in the American Style incorporated open planning, indoor-outdoor living spaces, climatic considerations, designed landscaping, natural materials, flexible furnishings and technologically-advanced domestic equipment. These were the crucial components of Gordon's concept of modernism; this was her formula for better living. The American Style, with its emphasis on the evolutionary nature of modern design, represented a new direction in American domestic architecture. These ideas were not

necessarily new or revolutionary, but in the pages of *House Beautiful*, were presented in a practical formulation that could be easily understood and applied across a broad demographic. Gordon merely helped to gather existing theories into a cohesive philosophy. She established a set of guidelines by which design trends that already existed could be defined, and indeed judged, even by the average American home buyer. The American Style, as a common-sensical approach to architectural production, seemed poised for immediate success. There was however, a strong competitor. By the end of 1952, Gordon began to directly attack what she viewed as the greatest threat to the American Style's victory: the unlivable, autocratic, foreign modernism of the International Style.

## Chapter V: The Threat to the Next America

With the American Style, Elizabeth Gordon encouraged individualism and democratic architecture, yet she had never really been concerned with the larger implications of architectural choice. By 1953, she began to connect architecture with a larger political, cultural and social context.[1] To bolster her cultural critiques, Gordon commissioned a number of leading intellectuals who shared the magazine's views to comment on contemporary lifestyle and architecture. Their contributions lent *House Beautiful* additional name recognition, and underscored the legitimacy of its editorials. By invoking distinguished professionals (if from other fields), Gordon shaped a strategy that elevated her cause of "better living" to the status of a wide-spread social movement – one that was supported by more than a few editors or journalists on Madison Avenue.

Hoping to tap recent intellectual currents and lend a credible theoretical tenor to her architectural critique, Gordon borrowed Lyman Bryson's concept of "The Next America."[2] Bryson, a distinguished author and consultant for public affairs at Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), provided Gordon with both a title for her forthcoming editorial series, and a general philosophical underpinning for the argument she would present. For Bryson, the "American idea of culture [was] democratic."[3] Political and cultural democracies were based on freedom of choice, a liberty guaranteed by the success of American industrial power; the triumph of capitalism over any other political-

economic system was thus implied. In Bryson's view, the economic ventures of the great industrialists had eliminated want, and allowed the solution of larger social problems. Thus freed from their own fears of basic survival (both economic and political), postwar Americans possessed a greater opportunity to "express whatever greatness and creative power is in them."[4]

Of utmost importance, argued Bryson, was the idea of "democracy in the arts of the home," an extension of the art and "life of the mind." Echoing the sentiments of *House Beautiful*, Bryson observed that "ignorance was the greatest obstacle to freedom." As in the political realm, he argued that democracy in the arts was predicated upon choice. His argument called for an informed public. He continued, "ignorance is the greatest obstacle to freedom. In politics, we call the danger totalitarianism. It is evil not only because men in totalitarian countries have to live by tyrannous dictation, but also because they can never even make the acquaintance of the rich possibilities of other ways of life…In the arts, we call it rigidity of taste."[5]

Thus, Bryson, like Gordon, encouraged both flexible taste and freedom in the design marketplace, if only to "serve the democratic purpose of enlarging every individual's knowledge of the endless possibilities of beauty and comfort and self-expression which are the true purposes of the arts of the home."[6] Self-expression and individual creation of culture became crucial to Bryson's theory. Though he envisioned a future in which the general quality of American life would be enriched by goods available on the free market, he feared that cultural freedom, with its imbedded notions of

democracy and liberty, were threatened by conspiracy, anarchy and suppression.[7] The greatest weapons in the coming battle against communism and totalitarian oppression, argued Bryson, were free market capitalism and consumption of household goods. Patriotic (and xenophobic) rhetoric was very much at play in his polemic; Gordon converted this to the cause of the American Style.

Gordon's new executive editor, Joseph A. Barry, added a new concern for humanism to this growing controversy. Barry, an American writer and protégé of Gertrude Stein, joined the *House Beautiful* staff after his return from Paris in 1952.[8] A long-time contributor to the *New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Herald Tribune* and the Paris bureau of *Newsweek*, Barry brought with him the perspective of an international author. But more importantly, he had the frame of reference of an author whom Stein introduced to Pablo Picasso as her nephew, who interviewed Le Corbusier personally while the Unité d'habitation was under construction in Marseilles, and who later edited Bruno Zevi's *Architecture as Space* (1957).[9] From his Parisian experiences, Barry understood the social implications of architectural choice, and he was highly critical of the contributions of the modern architects who trained in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Barry much preferred what he described as an architecture of humanism, of warmth, of democratic individuality. The key to this kind of modern architecture, as he argued, was design in four dimensions: length, width, depth and time.[10] He viewed the functionalist line of modern architecture as a two-dimensional source of individual suffering. He wrote, adopting part of Winston Churchill's famous

line: “how men build conditions how men live. If we choose the barren glass cage of a Mies van der Rohe, we shall suffer the consequences of a loss of privacy and personality. If we crowd collectively in the colossal pigeonholes of a Le Corbusier, we shall set ourselves up for total and authoritarian control. But if we encourage the kinds of homes where the spirit of man can grow and flower, where each can develop in his own peculiar way, we shall ensure the new democracy of culture.”[11] With Barry, the theme of humanism – alongside Bryson’s call for a democratic architecture for the Next America – was posited in stark opposition to the rising tide of the International Style.

With Bryson’s cultural premise and Barry’s architectural foundation, Gordon launched a new assault. In April 1953, she penned “The Threat to the Next America,” a scathing critique of the International Style (Fig. 5.1). This provocative and perceptive essay was a watershed event not only in her career as editor-in-chief of *House Beautiful*, but in the evolution of American architectural taste. Gordon introduced her essay by stating:

> Something is rotten in the state of design – and it is spoiling some of our best efforts in modern living. After watching it for several years, *House Beautiful* has decided to speak out and appeal to your common sense, because it is common sense that is mostly under attack. Two ways of life stretch before us. One leads to the richness of variety, to comfort and beauty. The other, the one we want to fully expose to you, retreats to

> poverty and unliveability. Worst of all, it contains a threat of cultural dictatorship.[12]

The threat, argued Gordon, was the unlivable, autocratic, and foreign modernism of the International Style (Fig. 5.2; 5.3). She accused its leading practitioners, the "artistic dictators" Mies, Gropius and Le Corbusier, of subverting democratic individuality and ignoring basic human requirements. Along with these three men, the entire architectural establishment, specifically Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art, found its way into her cross-hairs. Gordon believed that certain "self-chosen elite" positioned at highly visible museums (MOMA), architecture magazines (*Architectural Forum* and *Arts & Architecture*), and design schools (Harvard and IIT) were thoughtlessly promoting the "mystical idea that less is more," which in her view, was simply less.[13] The danger for the American consumer, argued Gordon, was that an aversion to "comfort, convenience, and functional values" was coming from "highly placed individuals and highly respected institutions."[14] Such "totalitarian" influence, as she deemed it, was detrimental to the formation of free taste and specifically to the American Style.[15] The problem, in Gordon's view, was that this "hair shirt school" valued appearance over performance and comfort.

For Gordon, the dominance of the International Style and the methods by which it was promoted contained a seed of social threat.[16] To give her argument a deeper legitimacy and cultural resonance, she accessed – primarily through her rhetorical strategies – the contemporary political anxiety and paranoia: if modern architects were

artistic dictators, then Johnson and MOMA were cultural dictators on par with Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Kim Il-Sung. She had long believed that design had social significance, and the dominance of the International Style modernist had specific "social implications, because it affects the heart of our society – the home."[17] With "The Threat to the Next America," Gordon argued that "if we can be sold on accepting dictators in matters of taste and how our homes are to be ordered, our minds are certainly well prepared to accept dictators in other departments of life."[18] The American road to freedom, for Gordon, was paved by individual taste and judgment. Her hope was that self-trust and good judgment in matters of taste would lead to the recovery of the "good, sensible life."

Gordon had long promoted modern design that could function without being functionalist. Since the close of World War II, she had opposed the International school of modern design on the basis of its "irrational and austere" prototypes. Instead, she championed a livable modernism based on the intimate relationship between function (connoting that which functioned or worked), comfort, beauty and economics. Gordon believed that the continued dominance of International Style undermined all her recent efforts. Though many within the design profession felt the controversy over modernism had been resolved, Gordon did not. She still sensed real opposition, and personally knew many modern architects who were highly critical of the avant-garde. These architects, as she later attested, were perhaps unwilling to publicly voice dissention "because they are afraid to start a public fight with cultists who do the selecting."[19] For many years, Gordon

had observed a "ferment of uneasiness among the best-informed people in the design world about the irrationality of much of the architecture and design that is being praised to the skies…"[20] Using this knowledge along with *House Beautiful*'s recent interview with Edith Farnsworth as specific evidence, she accused Mies (and his followers) of ignoring significant concerns in postwar housing: common sense design, climatic concerns, regional variations, and ease of maintenance. The International Style line of modernism, she argued, was tainted with "anti-reason" that manifested itself in "unscientific, irrational and uneconomical – illogical things like whole walls of unshaded glass… heavy buildings up on thin, delicate stilts."[21]

With "The Threat to the Next America," Gordon firmly positioned herself and *House Beautiful* as leading proponents of a humanistic and indigenous modernism founded upon the principles of the American Style. These were closely aligned to organic theory, though at that current moment, Gordon was not concerned with labeling them as such. She did not simply criticize International Style modernism; she offered a road map to re-discovering good modern design. She offered simple Vitruvian principles as a guide: "comfort *and* performance *and* beauty."[22] Borrowing heavily from Lewis Mumford's *Roots of Contemporary Architecture*, which appeared in abridged form in *House Beautiful* in October 1952, she argued that the early modern ideas of simplification had been necessary to counter the excess of the late nineteenth century. However, when architects began to separate function from form and prioritize aesthetics, design went awry. Thus, Gordon encouraged her readers to re-examine the International Style, and all

other forms of modern architecture, apply "canons of common sense," and ask three crucial questions: does it work; will it hold up; and does it look good?[23]

**Fall Out**

Gordon's warning of an impeding threat to the nation's architectural (and by implication, social and political) well-being generated immediate and voluminous public response. Her editorial shocked and galvanized the architectural community, garnering reactions from architects, builders, editors, educators, critics, and consumers alike. The dialogue reverberated for months in print, and for decades within her public career and private life. Gordon's role in the larger architectural debate was critical, not only in her opposition to a blind continuation of what she understood as a stagnant modernist lineage, but in her stalwart support of alternative design tropes. Her unrestrained public assault on the International Style forced her into a camp that opposed many prominent designers and institutions, including, not insignificantly, MOMA and the American Institute of Architects (AIA).[24] Yet Gordon's newly articulated position gained her the alliance of the "other side," those who had been quietly, and not so quietly, marshalling forces around Frank Lloyd Wright or the Bay Region School. Invigorated by the events that followed the April 1953 issue of *House Beautiful*, Gordon began to transform the nation's largest shelter magazine into a powerful vehicle for the dissemination of alternative modernist ideas. In doing so, *House Beautiful* became the exclusive mouthpiece for a maturing organic movement.

With "The Threat to the Next America," Gordon became embroiled in the politics of architecture.[25] On the one hand, she opened professional polemics to a non-architectural audience; on the other hand, she invoked seemingly irrational rhetoric that threatened her own credibility. The battle between competing postwar modernisms, an emerging American Style and a dominating International Style, had been building since at least 1946; even so, the attack of 1953 could be read as an act of anger and retribution. While Gordon never committed this to print, her long-time associate editor (and former Taliesin apprentice) Curtis Besinger attested, in a 1986 letter to Robert Venturi, that the trigger for Gordon's attack was outright and unexpected rejection. Besinger wrote that "*House Beautiful* was asked by the U.S. Department of State to 'do' the furnishings for a 'typical builders house'…to be exhibited in Europe to show how Americans live. The 'decorators' of the magazine shopped the market and put together a package of furnishings for this 'typical' house. But when the exhibition opened in Europe the 'package' had been replaced with one that could have appeared in a [Museum of Modern Art] 'Good Design' show."[26] Gordon would have likely been infuriated by this dismissal. Whether motivated by anger or not, her role in the postwar architectural discourse was significant. Though her line of argument was highly problematic and at times logically inconsistent (or purposefully selective), her effort to re-open and close a long-standing controversy remained considerable.

Gordon's essay spared no one and alienated many. Within days of its release, her article provoked a substantial response. If she aspired to create a broad public forum for

architectural debate, she was successful. Her views garnered a great deal of national attention, including a full-page rejoinder in *Architectural Forum* (Fig. 5.4). *House Beautiful* received hundreds of letters to the editor (reprinted in June, July, and October 1953) reporting 85% in "hearty approval," while the remaining 15% were divided between "those who say we are flogging a dead horse and those who say we are attacking the greatest designers and architects alive."[27]

Opposition was fierce. For example, W.E. Ross from Jackson, Mississippi wrote: "Your Elizabeth Gordon is an uninformed masterpiece and her so called article on design is really nothing but a mass of self-contradiction, insinuations and vituperations. Why don't you have this bigoted female educated before you let her preach further."[28] Others were shocked that she dared to attack Mies, Gropius and Le Corbusier in such an "emotional" and "irrational" manner, and for the "obvious purpose of selling 'possessions.'[29] Arthur Miller, art critic for the *Los Angeles Times,* wrote to inform her that in Los Angeles at least, the International Style was "long dead," and that "to see a big magazine like yours pugnaciously saving us from it is like watching somebody exhume and hang a corpse….."[30] However dated Miller felt Gordon's argument may have been, his obituary for the International Style was not entirely accurate, as illustrated by contemporary building in the Hollywood Hills publicized through *Arts & Architecture*'s Case Study Program.[31]

*House Beautiful* advertised and circulated "The Threat to the Next America" beyond its immediate subscribers, enabling the wider architectural community to

contribute commentary and criticism (Fig. 5.5). Gordon's professionalism, judgment, and knowledge, as well as her audience's ability to evaluate her opinion, were called into question. At least one respondent was so offended that he canceled his subscription.[32] George Howe, a proclaimed modernist and the Chairman of the Yale School of Architecture, outlined the flaws and inconsistencies in Gordon's logic, and lambasted her vicious attack exclaiming "Grandmother, what big teeth you have!"[33] Peter Blake, then an editor at *Architectural Forum*, branded Gordon rather than the International Style as the real threat to the Next America. While he agreed that architectural criticism fell within her rights as a journalist, portraying all Modernists (of which he was one) as "interested in promoting total control, regimentation and dictatorship" was not.[34] He accused Gordon of merely trying to increase her magazine's circulation, and warned that she had penned her own epitaph: "Here lies *House Beautiful*, scared to death by a chromium chair."[35]

Given *House Beautiful*'s previous support of the Bay Region School, William W. Wurster's protest was perhaps most surprising. In two letters, he dismissed Gordon's article as having no "basis for serious architectural discussion."[36] His second response appeared with thirty signatures from prominent California designers including Lawrence Halprin, Garrett Eckbo, Theodore C. Bernardi, and Donn Emmons.[37] Their objections and signatures were printed in full, and a copy of the letter was sent to all the "leading architectural magazines and schools."[38] As a group, they opposed Gordon's implication that modern architects were seditious (thus preparing minds for totalitarianism) and

harbored the intent to undermine American freedom. They protested her evaluation of architecture based on what they perceived as "political criteria," and moreover regretted "the attack on European art and architecture and the implication that all good art has is roots in America and all that is European is subversive, perverted or sick." [39]

Still, Gordon's supporters were many. She was commended for her courage to speak out against the architectural mainstream by architects such as Henry H. Saylor, the editor of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*.[40] Allegiance also came from predictable quarters, with Lewis Mumford, a frequent contributor to *House Beautiful*, writing that "the point you make about the irrational nature of so much modern design, and the authoritarian way in which it has been put over, might as well be emblazoned in gold" [41] J. Robert Swanson and Pipsan Saarinen Swanson gave their "hats off," hoping the article would trigger a "general movement against 'the gang.'"[42] Bruce Goff expressed that he and the University of Oklahoma backed her "one hundred percent to expose this racket."[43] Karl Kamrath, an organic architect practicing in Texas, wrote that Gordon's "ability and courage to put into words what I am sure so many of us deeply feel provides a tremendous lift and inspiration." He hoped to pass on her message on by delivering Gordon's text as the commencement address to the University of Texas School of Architecture.[44] Furniture manufacturers and professionals from the building materials sector also rallied around Gordon's "flag," expressing their wholehearted support in the event of the inevitable "enemy retaliation."[45]

The controversy emerged in great detail within the pages of *House Beautiful*, and in fact, followed Gordon for the remainder of her career. An unexpected and positive turn of events came when Gordon received a telegram that read "Surprised and delighted. Did not know you had it in you. From now on at your service... --GODFATHER"[46] (Fig. 5.6).

She had no idea who the "godfather" was, but would soon learn that Frank Lloyd Wright had stepped up to her defense. Wright followed the anonymous telegram with a letter, in which his identity as Godfather became clear. He urged Gordon to be even more forceful in her editorial policies, and insisted that she seek out the controversial center that revolved in part, around him. He encouraged her to reveal what he viewed as the real detrimental impact of the "Bauhaus invasion upon the true basis of Architecture for Next America."[47]

Wright's encouragement was perhaps the most empowering of all that Gordon received (Fig. 5.7). She had long admired his ideas, if not all of his work. She had published a favorable account of Taliesin West in 1946, though she wrote confidentially that she had not been aesthetically impressed.[48] At the time, presumably before she became so indebted to him, Gordon likely understood that his work suffered from many of the flaws for which she later criticized the Internationalists, including "cantilevering things that don't need to be cantilevered."[49] Thus, few of *House Beautiful*'s published images belonged to Wright, but many of its positions owed something to his theory. When she announced the American Style in 1950, she upheld Wright as its "spiritual leader."[50] Upon the architect's death in 1959, she recalled that she had always "tried to

edit by Wrightian precepts and principles,"[51] though in reality, prior to 1953 she avoided any overt connection to the "organic." Nevertheless, from the moment of Wright's public declaration of support, *House Beautiful*'s concept of the American Style as *the* modern architecture for the Next America became synonymous with Wright's brand of organicism.

The relationship between *House Beautiful* and Wright was further cemented when members of his Taliesin fellowship joined Gordon's editorial staff. As architectural editor James Marston Fitch resigned "in protest" to the editorials of 1953, Gordon replaced him with Wright's apprentice John deKoven Hill.[52] Ahead of all others, Hill became Gordon's close confidant and was highly influential within the publication.[53] Hill, who entered the Taliesin Fellowship in 1938, had spent the previous fifteen years working closely by Wright's side, as both architect and interior designer. Gordon hired Hill as the new architectural editor, and later promoted him to executive editor. He occupied a large role: not only did he guide the editorial content of the magazine, but he was in fact responsible for designing nearly one-quarter of what *House Beautiful* published between 1953 and 1963. Wright had thought to position Hill as a voice for Wrightian organic architecture; Hill became a force of his own. He hired Curtis Besinger, a Taliesin apprentice from 1939 to 1955 and later a professor at the University of Kansas, to contribute architectural essays. Kenn Lockhart, another Taliesin Fellow, also joined *House Beautiful*'s ranks. Gair Sloan, trained in Aaron Greene's San Francisco office was hired as the new in-house draftsman. Wright's telegram helped Gordon when she had "felt mighty alone when [the

Threat] article came out;" his apprentices proved to be of much more powerful assistance. Wright's support, Hill's design talent, Besinger's critical writing, and Sloan's able hand "allowed House Beautiful to... design & [sic] build & show [their] alternative to the Bauhaus," and, wrote Gordon, "that was better than a lot of verbage."[54]

**American Style goes Organic**

As *House Beautiful* became "an extension of Taliesin," Gordon was increasingly able to suggest an environment in which an organicized American Style could thrive. By challenging the notion of what it meant to be modern, Gordon suggested a new life for an old design philosophy. Importantly, she lent organic architects a mainstream audience. By championing these men, who Esther McCoy called the "architectural misfits" of the 1950s, and by attacking their direct competition, Gordon risked professional rejection.[55] Yet her actions galvanized an otherwise scattered and peripheral organic movement.

Gordon knew that Wright was at the center of this movement. She also knew that his former apprentices such as Fay Jones, Alden Dow, and Aaron Green were establishing successful independent practices. And, architects who had not studied Wright were nonetheless adopting his architectural mannerisms and principles. Yet, as Gordon wrote years later, enthusiasm for overtly Wrightian organic architecture was limited. Though "Frank Lloyd Wright was creating new, exciting containers…for most people, he was too far ahead. His taste was not for the average family. Progress was fine,

but it musn't look different!"[56] This recalled again her long held support of mitigated modernism, one that was "modern but not *too* modern."

What Gordon could achieve that Wright could not was an essential re-packaging of organic architecture. Her strategy was to link it to her less esoteric theory of the American Style. Her challenge was to reformulate the Wrightian brand so that it could become sellable to a mass market. Even so, Wright would not be the star; he would remain the shadow of inspiration and legitimacy.[57] With her concept of a revitalized and essentially popular form of organic architecture, Gordon explored the middle ground between facsimile (of Wright) and fetish (of Bruce Goff). Wright may have pioneered modern organic space, but it was the subsequent generation of American Stylists that made it essentially livable, and with the aid of Gordon, newly popular.

## Chapter VI: Architecture and the Individual

Elizabeth Gordon's alliance with Frank Lloyd Wright significantly altered her editorial policies. She was still concerned with good modern design, with livable homes, and with establishing a unique American Style. But between 1953 and 1959, Gordon began to connect the Pace Setter Houses to Wright's organic design, with her own added emphasis on practicality, comfort, and personal identity. She did not abandon her crusade for a national domestic style; she merely readjusted her strategy to accommodate an unmistakably organic architecture.

Though many architects and colleagues supported her criticism of the International Style, an equally significant number of design professionals thought her views were both obsolete and severe. Wright continually offered Gordon private consolation in a string of letters and social visits, and public support in two critical essays appearing in *House Beautiful* in May and October 1953: "Frank Lloyd Wright Speaks Up," and "For a Democratic Architecture."[1] In these essays, he echoed Gordon's critical stance against the International Style, condemning its sterility, mediocrity and collectivism. For Wright, this strain of modern architecture, diametrically opposed to his own, threatened the human soul, individual conscience, and the "spirit of Democracy."[2] He criticized its producers, its promoters and consumers for bowing to "massology," for propagating a collective architectural style for the masses.[3]

Like Wright, Gordon questioned the social significance of architectural choice.[4] If Gordon's "The Threat to the Next America" decidedly positioned her on the organic side of postwar modernism, her follow-up essay "Does Design Have Social Significance?" pressed the matter far beyond any issue of sterile aesthetics. There were, argued Gordon, social consequences in choosing "bad modern" design. She was careful to define that which she disparaged: modern architecture developed by and from the early works of J.J.P Oud, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier, and explicitly codified by Hitchcock and Johnson in the MOMA exhibition in 1932.[5] But she expanded the list of antagonists and of those worthy of blame to include publicists, congresses (she likely meant CIAM), and those who embraced "monumentality – a probable reference to José Luis Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion's "Nine Points on Monumentality" (1943) and Louis Kahn's "Monumentality" (1944).[6] Philip Johnson, it seemed, was still the biggest offender. Gordon's accusations may have seemed like they targeted old enemies and exhausted issues, but she firmly believed that the International Style continued to dominate modernism on the American architectural scene. Her belief was well-represented by such prominent contemporary examples as the United Nations Assembly building, which Lewis Mumford disparaged in his *New Yorker* column in March 1953.[7] In Gordon's view, the International Style as expressed in singular, impersonal, cubic masses was not the only culprit; a link existed between the urban environment, commercial and institutional buildings, and the single-family home. The International Style then, threatened a certain "pattern of life." The large International

Style blocks were models for the "bee-hive structures" of Le Corbusier's apartment houses, which stood in direct contrast to Wright's Broadacre City model. The later – Wright's decentralized suburban ideal – argued Gordon, was closer to the "democratic dream" and upheld the "great humanistic tradition in Western culture."[8]

Gordon's search for a "democratic architecture for a democratic society" was not just "solely a matter of taste and esthetics" but "literally a matter of cultural—and social – life and death."[9] She firmly believed that in 1953, American design had reached a pivotal moment, a "fateful fork in the road."[10] She saw only two possible alternatives: democratic individualism, or totalitarian collectivism.[11] With these conflicting choices, Gordon urged the American public to weigh the evidence, and to choose a path for itself.

Gordon's own path was clear. Her mission, as an editor-cum-cultural-evangelist, was to lead the American public to an informed decision on matters of taste and living.[12] Her alliance with Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship gave her a powerful (and recognizable) tool with which to shape popular taste. This association was mutually beneficial, both in the short and the long term.[13] Wright was able to use *House Beautiful*, with its large circulation, to extend his views to a receptive popular audience. *House Beautiful*, on the other hand, with Wright's blessing, could present compelling evidence for the continued validity of organic architecture.

The *House Beautiful* audience was primed for a postwar renaissance of organic architecture by Gordon's previous emphasis on humanism, naturalism, and the American Style. Though she had shied from applying the term "organic" to particular architectural

examples, in part because of a falling out with Wright in 1950 over what he felt was Gordon's "falsification of the nature of organic architecture," the Pace Setter Houses had, since 1948, provided an architectural model for the application of organic principles.[14] As Gordon asserted her critical opinions, and Wright became more involved with the magazine (after John deKoven Hill and Curtis Besinger joined) an overt link between the Pace Setter houses and Wright was forged. The term "organic" was once more a mainstay of *House Beautiful*'s vocabulary, at least until Wright's death in 1959.

Wright's growing media presence and his epic production of moderate-cost Usonian houses only intensified the public's (and *House Beautiful*'s) interest in organic architecture. As he moved from "outside the ranks" to the head of the architectural mainstream, a position guaranteed by his receipt of the AIA Gold Medal in 1949, he was eager and able to spread the "gospel" of organic to a large audience.[15]

*Frank Lloyd Wright: Sixty Years of Living Architecture*, a traveling retrospective, proved particularly advantageous in the architect's – and Gordon's – crusade (Fig. 6.1). The exhibit premiered in Philadelphia at Gimbel's Department Store in January 1951, and over the subsequent three years showed in Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland and Mexico.[16] In the fall of 1953, *Sixty Years of Living Architecture* returned to the United States and opened in New York.[17] As part of the exhibit, Wright, his apprentices, Gordon, and the *House Beautiful* staff transformed a vacant Manhattan lot (the future site of the Guggenheim) into a full-scale model of "The Usonian House." The prototype Usonian featured a selection of Wright's furniture, at the appropriate scale and

price range for the typical Usonian house. Hill, who had just been hired by *House Beautiful*, fitted the model with Japanese screens, textiles, and Chinese sculpture, many of which came from Gordon's own collection. The show was an enormous success, and Wright's acclaim soared.

With *Sixty Years of Living Architecture* and *House Beautiful*'s publicity, Wright found a new legitimacy within the mainstream of American taste. Organic architecture, as an alternative expression of modernism, emerged from the annals of architectural history, to which it had been relegated by the "European invasion" of 1932, to achieve a new postwar vitality.[18] As a more humanistic approach to design, organic architecture once again resonated in a postwar culture that was becoming ubiquitously standardized and mechanized. Negative reviews of postwar functionalism, authored by figures such as Lewis Mumford, suggested that organic design had an enormous potential for popularity. As the ranks of organic architects (self-identified or not) swelled, Wright began to take notice. In the decade that followed World War II, Wright and Gordon, who essentially acted as his unofficial publicist, positioned organic theory not as a doctrine of design processes, but as a general philosophy to inform building and living in postwar America.

Wright's stance, and his acknowledgement of the social, cultural, and architectural issues that haunted postwar America, became a rallying point for not only figures like Gordon, but for many young architects. Between 1946 and 1957, Wright seemed to produce nearly as many books as he did buildings. Though his publications offered a repetitive message, the definition of organic still remained elusive. The concept

constantly grew and changed. Since the publication of his 1908 essay, "In the Cause of Architecture," the relationship between building, society, and the individual had been a key social theme; simplicity, harmony and integrity were the dominant architectural themes.[19] Wright claimed to take inspiration not only from the personality of the client, but from the specific character of the individual site. From the most intimate level of detail to the larger view of natural surroundings, Wright adamantly argued that the house should "grow from its site," and take a form that expressed harmony with a larger context. In postwar America, where designers were struggling to come to terms with increased mechanization, an overabundance of consumer goods, and an increasingly impersonal suburbanization, Wright's philosophy – nearly fifty years in the making – had deep resonance.

Wright's *An Autobiography*, republished in 1943, became a "bible" of sorts for architects who were coming of age.[20] His repeated themes of simplicity (merging of elements into a harmonious whole), plasticity (continuous flow of space and material), humanism (man as the gauge of scale, and the measure of use and comfort) staged a clear opposition to functionalist modernism of the International Style.[21] Though many of his modernist ideas paralleled that of his rivals, Wright found a way to inject architecture with a living energy that was beyond what other practitioners had achieved. He was set apart by a desire to design in three dimensions rather than two, working "from within outward."[22] The enclosure of three-dimensional space became the new mantra of postwar architecture.[23]

Though *An Autobiography* was perhaps the most visible of Wright's publications, contemporary practitioners found other essays written in the late 1940s and early 1950s particularly meaningful. "The Language of an Organic Architecture" (from *The Future of Architecture*), dated May 20, 1953, was of specific use to young architects. It was in this essay that Wright clearly defined key concepts of his broad theory for the postwar generation.[24] Writing at the height of the controversy between Gordon and the International Stylists, Wright provided a concise nine-term lexicon for organic architecture. These points did not provide a formal image, nor did they hint at the process of design; rather, they indicated a thought pattern and value set. His themes were much the same as they had always been: nature; the organic; form follows function; romance; tradition; integrated ornament; spirit; the third dimension; and space. Yet his emphasis had decidedly shifted to a cultural and political concept of organic architecture as "the free architecture of ideal democracy."[25] To his nine points, he added a tenth and final entry: democracy. A concept not easily understood, particularly in relation to architecture, democracy for Wright had come to mean the "ideal of freedom for growth of the individual."[26] He continued:

> the principles of organic architecture are the center line of our democracy in America when we do understand what both really mean. Only by the growth and exercise of *individual conscience* does the man earn or deserve his "rights." Democracy is the opposite of totalitarianism, communism, fascism or mobocracy. But democracy is constantly in danger from mobocracy – the rising tide of as yet

> unqualified herd-instinct. Mechanized mediocrity, the *conditioned* mind instead of the *enlightened* mind.[27]

The mechanized mediocrity surely alluded to the International Style, developed by "conditioned" minds – likely Wright's opinion of Walter Gropius or Mies van der Rohe. Wright adamantly encouraged "young minds" to avoid such "sterilization" and "cliché."[28]

Though Wright published many editions of his organic theory, his view continued to shift. This was consistent with his fundamental viewpoint: organic architecture never really found "finished" form. Yet, as a theory, the organic always seemed to exist in opposition to something. Whether it was the eclecticism or historicism of the late-nineteenth century, or the functionalism of the mid-twentieth century, organic theory found its greatest power by expressing what it was *not* rather than establishing what it was.

**Principles are Universal, Solutions are Specific**

While Frank Lloyd Wright and Elizabeth Gordon battled the supremacy of the International Style, Bruno Zevi, the Italian champion of organic architecture, was coming to terms with what the multiplicity of modernisms meant in terms of architectural practice. Having fled Italy for the United States in 1938, Zevi trained at Harvard under Walter Gropius; it was at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, perhaps ironically, that he discovered organic architecture and Frank Lloyd Wright. As part of a younger

generation of architects who believed that figures like Le Corbusier, Gropius and Sigfried Giedion had long (or long enough) dominated the modern discourse, Zevi led a vigorous effort to criticize and revise orthodox modernism.[29] He believed, as did Gordon, that a liberated form of architecture, a new organic architecture, was emerging. It relied in part on Wright, but was fully dedicated to problems that Wright's architecture had failed to resolve. Those designers, like Zevi, who looked to re-frame organic architecture took Wright's designs and theory, mixed in regional and vernacular architectural solutions, and tapped into "common sense," to use a term that both Zevi and Gordon favored.

Zevi published *Verso l'architettura organica* in 1945, and the English-language edition, *Towards an Organic Architecture*, in 1950. In this book, he established a clear definition of organic that reflected a deep understanding of Wright, both past and present. It was here that Zevi demonstrated the contemporary conception of what organic had come to mean. He synthesized what scholars and architects had written about the evolution of organic ideas, and importantly, what the next generation of modernists were making of Wright's principles. Though his observations were based primarily upon American buildings completed in the 1940s, Zevi demonstrated for the postwar audience how Wrightian ideas had been and would be interpreted, rejected, and modified.

Though serviceable, Zevi's synthetic definition of organic was, as he himself admitted, still approximate.[30] He consulted the writings of William Lescaze, Claude Bragdon, Sigfried Giedion, Louis Sullivan, Walter Curt Behrendt, and the Musuem of Modern Art's *Organic Design* exhibition of 1940.[31] The result was a framework in which

to understand organic, both as applicable to Wright, and as applicable to a subsequent generation of architects of which *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter designers were very much a part.

Organic, according to Zevi's interpretation, could be best understood in terms of opposition: organic versus inorganic (Fig. 6.2). Organic architecture embodied the "search for the particular."[32] It offered the perspective of realism (or reality), and naturalism. It embraced irregular and dynamic forms, in some cases freed from rigorous geometry and the constraints of classical composition. Organic was the product of common sense and native architecture. Inorganic, on the other hand, sought the universal, the ideal. It embraced both "stylism" and classical form. Inorganic forms were static, geometrical, perfectly composed and proportioned. Inorganic, the product of (formal) education, aspired toward systematization. Zevi added that "organic architecture has a place of its own – not in the aesthetics of architecture, but in the psychology, in the social interests and in the intellectual premises of those who are practicing architecture. The distinction, then, between organic and inorganic architecture appears not to be absolute, but one of degree and emphasis."[33]

The essential difference between organic and inorganic, then, was not so much formal, but an attitudinal. In Zevi's view, adopted by Gordon, those who embraced organic allowed for growth, change, and flexibility. Rather than adhering to a stoic plan, the organic architect allowed himself to adapt to changing needs; he could add, subtract, and alter a design, even something that was prefabricated, so that it could "express the

actual and personal life of its occupants."[34] Overall, organic was characterized by an "attention to life and human comfort."[35]

Zevi understood that Wright had espoused many of these very same ideas; yet contemporary architects – however supportive they were of organic ideas – found fault with Wright's built work. If the younger generations of architects were rejecting Wright's formal lessons and his process, they still absorbed fundamental lessons of interior space as reality. Many of them embraced the idea of architecture generated from within, a method that allowed a free plan and continuous space. The younger generation was particularly sensitive to the possibilities of nature as a design source, to the use of natural and regional materials to lend their work a quality of specific character. Zevi characterized this as an experimental approach, as a constant search for new solutions to supplant "ready-made recipes to both practical and psychological problems."[36] He outlined several key issues, or flaws in Wrightian architecture, that he believed were remedied by a revised organic approach: dark interiors; interior décor of the "worst…taste;" a dependence on the "cult of wild nature" that resulted in an "exaggerated barbaric appearance" of rough stone; heavy projecting roofs; uncomfortable furniture; and the dominance of a "singular figurative element to which everything including comfort is subordinated." The later referred to Wright's obsession with geometry, specifically the hexagonal module used in the Paul Hanna House in Palo Alto, California (1936). Zevi's criticism of Wright was that his houses were not "livable." Zevi believed that contemporary architects could thoughtfully apply Wrightian principles, yet

"achieve coherence without forcing the issue."[37] What Zevi described was a revised and ultimately sellable concept of new organic architecture.

Architects who found this re-framed view of organic architecture appealing were, as Zevi implied, united in their search for particular rather than universal (or, "International") form. They enjoyed an individualist approach to architectural solutions that embraced flexibility and regional response. This was the brand of organic that Gordon and *House Beautiful* fully adopted and promoted.

Building on the clarity provided by Zevi's book, and on an intimate contact with Wright in 1953, Gordon fully embraced the cause of organic architecture. Just as Wright was eager to disseminate organic architecture to a broader public, Gordon was equally determined to unite architects under the organic label. In Wright, she found a legitimizing force and a great ally. Until this point in time, she had rarely used the term organic to describe the architecture she had published. Rather, she had employed the labels of livable, humanistic, naturalistic, or the American Style. Gordon's choice was perhaps best understood in terms of Wright's propriety attitude about his own brand of organic, or perhaps by a perception of an "otherness" associated with organic. With Gordon's definition of the American Style in 1950, *House Beautiful* had been well on its way to promoting a movement parallel to Wright's own. If the connection between Wright's organic architecture and that of the pre-1953 Pace Setter architects was only tangential, after 1953, Gordon made the connection direct.

For the remainder of her career as editor-in-chief of *House Beautiful*, Gordon found architects who were part of lesser-known group of those who, whether they recognized or not, fell into the camp described by Zevi, by Gordon, and more vaguely by Wright himself. Into the 1950s and early 1960s, designers such as Cliff May, Emil Schmidlin, Anshen & Allen, Alfred Browning Parker, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Vladimir Ossipoff, Roger Rasbach, and John deKoven Hill found an unwavering champion in Gordon. Their "parade of individuality" was put in service of not only representing the new organic architecture but defining a new American modernism.

**Alfred Browning Parker and Integrated Design**

With Wright and Zevi in the background, in November 1953, *House Beautiful* proclaimed to America that a new organic approach to modern design had arrived. The process was captured over a period of three years by the architectural photographer Ezra Stoller in the work of the young Floridian architect Alfred Browning Parker (Fig. 6.3). The focus of the production was Parker's home on Biscayne Bay near Miami, Florida. Named *House Beautiful's* Pace Setter House for 1954, the project represented the postwar renewal of an artistic, humanistic, and vaguely romantic design. It was an unmistakable response to the rising tide of orthodox modernism (Fig. 6.4). Though earning Frank Lloyd Wright's merit as "organic," the Pace Setter was not a reproduction of Wright's architecture. Parker's work was related, to be sure, and certainly benefited from a rich architectural inheritance. Yet the Pace Setter was wholly contemporary.

Wright, who introduced Parker's work to the *House Beautiful* audience, described it as a "new but ancient way of building."[38] *House Beautiful* rightly recognized it as an architecture that was at once technologically modern and spiritually progressive. For Parker, it was summation of the individual, region, and integrated design: the quintessence of a new organic architecture.

In his organic design method, Parker sought "integrity of both building and furnishings," so that all elements combined to create a coherent, unified whole.[39] The achievement of this organic integration, of which he accepted Wright as the master, depended on the development of the general and particular, the whole and the parts. The cumulative architectural effect was entirely dependent upon the careful consideration of both exterior and interior, both architecture (as conventionally understood) and fittings (meaning furnishings and decorative objects). The framework in which Parker designed was crucial to his seamless and meaningful integration of architecture. His architectural influences, his design theories, and the evolution of the Pace Setter as an essentially modern and integrated work of residential architecture all contributed a vital component to the whole.

**The Story of Influence: "A crude but good beginning"**

On the eve of World War II, as America struggled to establish an independent architectural identity, Alfred Browning Parker (b. 1916) began his own voyage of self-discovery. He was drawn to the art of building in early childhood, and as a young man in

1934, sought an education in architecture at the University of Florida at Gainesville. Though the Depression and threat of world war kept his class small (only three students graduated with Parker in 1939), he undertook a rigorous and broad course of study. He intellectually curious and well-read; Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau and Oliver Wendell Holmes were among his life-long favorites. He also displayed a proclivity for design early in his academic career. Working under the guidance of Rudolph Weaver, Parker broke free of the Beaux-Arts tradition of training to embrace an integrated architecture curriculum.[40] Weaver's program combined the study of structures, materials, methods of construction, mechanics of drawing, architectural history, art appreciation, aesthetics, graphics, and furniture design; with this program, he instilled within his students the "idea that architecture was not a piecemeal situation, but was indeed a culminating result of man's disciplines working towards the creation of a building."[41] Parker excelled in this environment, and internalized the idea of architecture as *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[42]

Fellowships allowed him to travel widely in Scandinavia, Cuba and Mexico, where he actively observed local cultures and building traditions.[43] Together with his architectural training, his travel experiences influenced him for decades to come. The Scandinavian emphasis on individualized, expressionistic form was particularly compelling, as was the trend to integrate the exterior envelope with interiors and furnishing.[44] In Mexico, Parker was drawn to the lessons of ancient architecture with its texture, mass, strength, and meaningful ornament.[45]

During the course of his studies and travel, Parker discovered a series of magazine articles that would alter the trajectory of his career. In January 1938, *Architectural Forum* and *Time* magazines both featured Frank Lloyd Wright. Each provided an "album of his work" and a primer of organic design theory (Fig. 6.5).[46] Both publications touted Wright as the "greatest architect of the 20th century," particularly impressing upon the audience the creative and structural significance of his latest masterpieces Fallingwater and the Johnson Wax Building.[47] With such favorable press, following close behind the formation of the Taliesin Fellowship and the re-publication of *An Autobiography* (1943), Wright was certainly at the forefront of the nation's – and Parker's – architectural imagination.

In February 1939, just three months before he received his Bachelor of Science in Architecture, Parker composed a letter to Wright. The soon-to-be-architect's admiration of the "master" was apparent, and his growing philosophical debt was discernible. He wrote:

> Embarking upon an architectural career is rapidly becoming a strangely thrilling and sometimes frightening experience. Naturally I wonder where my place is, and what my contribution will ultimately be. I do have a passionate desire to accomplish something worthwhile. I make that statement with the utmost sincerity. My ability may be small and my education to date somewhat superficial but my ambition is as honest as my desire is simple. I don't flatter myself that I am unique in that feeling…I do believe that I am an individual and as such I act.

> This letter is a sort of a "thank-you-note" for the encouragement I have derived from you. Truly your life and work – your life-work – has been an inspiration in my thoughts these few weeks past. Not in the sense of imitation have I enjoyed a few contacts with what you have done and are doing, but in thinking that I must do my utmost to live to the best that is within me.[48]

With Wright's architecture as an ideal, Parker was eager to apply his understanding of organic theory.[49] In January 1943, he enrolled in what he called his "post-graduate education:" the design and construction of his first home (Fig. 6.6). This project, which he shared in an exchange of letters and sketches with Wright, marked the beginning of a long and complex relationship between the two architects.

In March 1944, Parker asked Wright for "a bit of his time" to assess his "war-housing" in progress.[50] Parker enclosed local newspaper clippings (early proof of his ability to garner attention of the local architectural media) and photographs, explaining to Wright that he was building the house with his "own two hands," undertaking the diverse roles of "all trades."[51] Parker described the design and construction process in terms that he knew would resonate with Wright, demonstrating that although he was academically trained, he was still "learning by doing."[52]

These first letters between Parker and Wright indicated that the form of Parker's house had been dictated by necessity. War-time building restrictions forced Parker to approach the construction of his new home as a remodel, in which he would appropriate a

portion of an old filling station that stood on the site. Built over three years of evenings and Sundays, Parker used salvaged materials such as second-hand Miami oolite limestone, and secured tropical hardwoods from the Florida Keys. Demolished homes and commercial buildings yielded windows, copper wire, and hardware at minimal cost. Authorized to spend only $200 per year on construction costs, Parker's eventual out-of-pocket expenditure was only $1,218.[53] The completed house was not only a conceptual sibling of his vision for the ideal "tropical subsistence homestead," but an early homage to Wright's organic architecture.[54]

Wright certainly must have heard echoes of Usonia in Parker's account, and surely observed an architectural vocabulary and invocation of nature that paralleled Wrightian organic design. He viewed Parker's effort as a "crude but good beginning" that was leading "inevitably" toward an apprenticeship at Taliesin.[55] Parker anticipated just that direction, and indeed had intended his "war-housing" submission as an application to the Taliesin Fellowship.[56] Whether the design actually piqued Wright's interest or whether it was the younger man's obvious and sincere engagement with Wrightian principles, Parker was invited to join Taliesin (Fig. 6.7). With great anticipation, he accepted.[57] But in late 1945, shortly before his release from the Naval Reserves, Parker abruptly abandoned his plans to attend.[58] In hindsight, he claimed that he "thought maybe it was best to worship a great man from afar, rather than get too close and be consumed by the flame."[59] Whether out of a real fear of becoming "a little echo of Frank Lloyd Wright," or out of economic necessity and growing family responsibilities, Parker's choice to forego

instruction at Taliesin did not dull his interest in organic design.[60] From that point forward, Parker's intimate understanding of architecture came not only from his critical (and appropriately distanced) study of Wright's buildings and treatises, but from his constant testing and adaptation of organic theory in his everyday practice.[61]

**From Practice to Theory: Integrated Design as Mitigated Organicism**

As he grew in experience, Parker came to judge the success of a work of architecture, and the very appropriateness of labeling a building as such, by its unity, its coherence, and its ability to be experienced as an integrated whole. Architecture, he believed, was a combination of all of the arts. It was, however, unique in its marriage of aesthetics and utility utterly dependent upon practical considerations.[62] To create architecture, Parker felt that a designer should simultaneously consider necessity, structural performance, the relation of the building to its surroundings, appropriate materials, and service to the intended user. He expressed this simply as integrated design, which can be summed by the formula: Architecture = Building + Siting + Landscape + Furnishings.[63]

Parker constantly refined this formula, and by 1950, he applied variations to 131 custom homes and over 1,000 speculative units.[64] In his short licensed career, he had executed projects valued at more than $10 million.[65] Five years after declining Wright's invitation to join Taliesin, Parker's architectural practice was thriving. With such success,

a wife, four kids and a Great Dane, Parker was quickly outgrowing his "postgraduate house" (Fig. 6.8).

Despite his recent accomplishments, he could not yet afford to build a new home or to purchase a larger, more suitable one for his family. He was, however, able to buy a piece of land. The lot he chose on Biscayne Bay was less than ideal: certainly it was inexpensive, but it was long and narrow (measuring ninety-one feet by 715 feet), and sloped downward to the water's edge (Fig. 6.9). Privacy appeared to be at a minimum, as the site was flanked on one side by a public road and on the other by a boy's school and swimming pool. To complicate matters further, over three-quarters of the property flooded during severe hurricanes. The lot did, however, have a magnificent view of bay. The site was no doubt challenging, as was a set of deed restrictions that fixed the minimum value of improvements and limited the predominant construction materials to masonry. These were obvious disadvantages, ye Parker took Frank Lloyd Wright's "Prescription for a Modern House" to heart: Wright urged architects to find a good site, but "pick one at the most difficult spot – pick a site no one wants – but pick one that has features making for character: trees, individuality, a fault of some kind in the realtor mind."[66]

All "faults" included, Parker purchased the Biscayne Bay lot for $7,000 and designed his second home for himself. Early in the process, *House Beautiful* offered to publish the work. Upon its completion, Elizabeth Gordon named it the Pace Setter for 1954, an honor that often brought financial sponsorship and materials *gratis* (Fig. 6.10;

6.11). Gordon had first seen the Parker house in the fall of 1950, in its early phases of construction. She immediately understood this home represented a new trend in organic architecture. She wrote to Parker that the house, though still unfinished, was clearly "masterpiece" that could make him "a designer of stature."[67] *House Beautiful*'s sponsorship was Parker's first honor of the sort; he would be selected as a Pace Setter architect four times between 1954 and the close of the program in 1965.[68]

Parker's programmatic concept began, as any work of organic architecture would, with the individual. In this case, the needs, habits, values, budget, and dreams of Parker's own family were of primary concern. Parker derived the formal concept, on the other hand, from purely physical aspects of his bayside lot. The feature that gave this particular site its character (as Wright would say), was the view. This, along with climatic considerations, dictated the siting of the house with its longest elevation parallel to the shoreline. Parker aimed to maximize the benefit of the home's relation to the bay and simultaneously minimize the impact of natural (locational, geographic, and climatic) limitations. He prioritized the physical performance of home, designing not only for vistas, but for prevailing breezes, summer shade and winter sun. His design was meant to amplify the natural and climatic features of the land, to allow its character to permeate the character of the building.[69] The building that Parker envisioned would merely "strengthen, exploit, and extend" the landscape.[70]

Imbedded within this approach was Parker's tremendous interest in ecology. In this, he was encouraged by John Gifford, a prominent ecologist at the University of

Miami, who would later become his father-in-law. Parker encountered Gifford's work in 1940. Though an architect by training, Parker paid heed to a discipline that studied the interaction between organism and habitat, here, to be interpreted as the relationship between an object-building and its site or environment. Equally relevant to Parker was the interpretation of ecology in terms of what is now understood as environmentalism, a concept that encompassed John Muir's interest in conservation and Thoreau's encouragement of a simple, intimate relationship between man and nature. Parker's design choices were equally attentive to the complex relations between the designed object and nature, between man and nature, and between man and the designed object. With all of this in mind, he set about creating a home that could perform in accordance with ecologically-sound parameters.[71]

In practical terms, and Parker always placed priority on the practical, this meant creating a design specific to both the macroclimate of Miami's Biscayne Bay and the microclimate of his particular site.[72] Parker's was a regionalist approach, with principles adopted directly from Wright. At the core of this was the idea that "function and form must…spring from environmental conditions," that a careful study of the site and climate would inspire an appropriate structure for the building, and the structure would inform everything else. [73]

Thus inspired, Parker designed the 1954 Pace Setter as a series of simple cantilevers (Fig. 6.12). Three horizontal concrete slabs, anchored at each end by a monolithic limestone wall, provided the framework from which all else developed. The

concrete cantilever as a repeated structural element not only provided the fundamental design concept, but fulfilled the deed requirement for masonry construction. The form was oriented with its greatest length parallel the bay. It also allowed for large expanses of open and free space, where the slender steel support members neither inhibited the view to the exterior nor intruded upon the interior space. The cantilever system provided wide balconies and deep overhangs for shade, protection from heavy tropical rains, and outdoor living areas that nearly doubled the home's usable living space. Parker did not intend the structure as an architectural cliché, as a nod to something that was in vogue at the moment, but rather as a statement of strength and economy. He sought the cantilever as a solution not only because it worked simply, but because it unified a desired function with a pleasing form.

Parker, like Wright, believed that architecture should employ indigenous materials, used honestly in accordance with their nature (Fig. 6.13). On a bayside lot in Miami, this was on the one hand a purely functional choice that ensured proper performance and longevity in a harsh tropical climate. On the other hand, the choice of native materials represented a philosophical stance that physically and aesthetically connected the building to its locale. Working in accordance with both theory and practicality, Parker acquired all of the Pace Setter's construction materials from nearby sources. Much as he did for his post-graduate "war housing" project, he salvaged a great deal of the necessary materials. He obtained, free of charge, enough discarded Florida Quarry Keystone, a fossilized coral limestone, to construct the perimeter walls and

hearth.[74] He recovered the structural steel columns from a demolished building. Once Parker obtained *House Beautiful* sponsorship, Cuban mahogany, Honduran mahogany, and tidewater cypress were donated or provided at wholesale.[75]

Parker valued craftsmanship in every aspect of the project. He was deeply involved with the actual construction process, not only because he wanted to build economically, but because he felt his labor infused "spirit" into the work. With limited assistance, Parker poured the concrete cantilever slabs and laid the masonry. He cut and planed all of the interior wood surfaces, and designed and built all of the built-in furniture (most executed in mahogany). His involvement meant he controlled every element of the creation, and was able to maintain a spontaneity and flexibility that would otherwise have been impossible. Parker described the construction process as one of derivatives: he began with the concept of the cantilever, but the actual dimensions of the house were derived from the structural capabilities of the steel columns he had salvaged. Likewise, the rich pattern that developed in the masonry walls was dependent on the quality of the material he had on hand, and his careful assessment and arrangement of each stone. The resulting composition demonstrated that he understood how to draw maximum advantage from his resources. He was fully aware of the nature of his chosen materials, his tools and their limits; most significantly, he saw the potential of the material to provide an ornamental scheme for the building.

**Integration: Pace Setter Inside Outward**

To achieve his goal of integrated design, an organic architecture in which all parts related to the whole to create a singleness of effect, Parker needed to consider far more than the concrete cantilever and the limestone bearing walls. Such a unified impression required that all aspects of utility, from the site, to structure, to materials, develop in a complimentary partnership with aesthetic elements such as furniture, fixtures, ornament and textiles. His priority was to simultaneously allow for function and beauty. The former involved the exterior envelope and the arrangement of spaces. The later involved a duality of ornamentation: first, that which was inherent to the materials or came from the technique of making; second, that which was added for further enrichment and comfort (or, the necessary made beautiful and folded into the design). With his careful design and dispensation of stonework, Parker insured that the Pace Setter exuded uncontrived, inherent beauty. Though the second type of ornament, including decorative arts objects, was not fundamentally dependant upon the first or even upon the larger body of architecture, Parker arranged it in such a way to uphold the "essential concept of unity."[76]

For the creation of this second type of ornament – that which was added – Parker selected the cantilever and the coral stone as thematic points of departure. Every detail, decorative object, and textile pattern repeated the rectangular proportions, colors, and textures that were drawn from and complimented both.[77] For example, he extended the cantilever motif to the structure of the raised living room floor, the fold of the steps, the design of built-in settee, the shelving, mantelpiece, and even the dining room table (Fig.

6.14). The rhythm of the rectangle, prominently displayed in the *persianas* (louvered doors), was repeated in the design of details large and small. The design's success depended on Parker's ability to unite the architectural package with its contents, and to integrate the interior fittings so they seemed an inevitable and natural part of the composition.[78] The masonry composition in particular, with its subtle influence of Yucatan stonework (which had struck him during his travels in the early 1940s), inspired an ornamental *leitmotif* that informed many decorative elements.[79]

Parker required a set of decorative objects and ornamental patterns that would, in abstraction, reveal the philosophical underpinnings and the dominant themes of the architectural whole. Without careful consideration of the interior decorative scheme, the unity of the design and the overall effect of the building, the house's specific architectural identity would be compromised. Off-the-shelf rugs, draperies, lamp shades, and linens were inappropriate for a house designed as a sophisticated demonstration of integrated architecture. To remedy this, Parker designed a series of five abstract patterns to be executed in a variety of media for various decorative and functional pieces. Each pattern, regardless of scale or perceived importance, invoked the dominant architectural theme of cantilever and cut stone (Fig. 6.15 and 6.16). The patterns recalled the rectangular form of the structural cantilever, the varied geometry of the masonry, the rhythm of *persianas*, and the contrasting texture of the coral. He carefully selected colors to correspond, referring to the natural stone, surrounding sea and adjacent landscape.

The patterns and motifs used in the 1954 Pace Setter House functioned beyond a mere embellishment for rugs, bed covers, sheets, or towels. While still providing visual enrichment, they became integral to the design scheme, and symbolically encompassed the story of home's evolution. The patterns described the process of design and making, demonstrated the architect's careful consideration of quality, and exhibited the possible cohabitation of craft with fine art. The Pace Setter patterns lent warmth and texture, and contrasted with the geometric coolness of concrete and stone. They added bursts of color and dynamism, both of which were intimately related to the home's immediate natural surroundings. This was not an applied ornament, but rather an integral ornament. It tied materiality to manufacture, and extended the theme and process of the entire design to even the smallest detail. The appropriate form of ornament, then, was derived from something inherent rather than something extraneous. Ornamental motifs were conceived as and remained a cohesive part of the whole, reinforcing rather than detracting. In Parker's case, his motifs served as a condensed metaphor, an abstract encapsulation of his design philosophy, and the fusion of that philosophy with architectural form. They became the abstract representation of an architectural problem and visual proof of its solution. Parker's Pace Setter revealed an integral relationship between form and aesthetics, and the interplay between interior and exterior. This house was a "total, unified concept."[80] The decorative motifs concentrated the complexity of the design into one packageable image, a *leitmotif* that offered a lasting individual identity for this house.

With the Pace Setter for 1954, *House Beautiful* promoted organic architecture that was above all else, an architecture of individuality. Parker devised specific solutions that were in direct response to his individual needs and reflected his own creative impulses. On the other hand, his choices were a direct response to the unique challenges of his site and of his region; it was this desire to respond to regional inflections of design that would inspire the next set of Pace Setter houses.

## Chapter VII: An Architecture of Specificity

Harwell Hamilton Harris was thirteen years older than the Pace Setter architect for 1954, Alfred Browning Parker (Fig. 7.1). Though little more than a decade separated the two architects, Harris, born in 1903, was of a different generation of American modernists. As Parker was just beginning his career, Harris had already cemented his status as an architect of note (Fig. 7.2). With such works as the 1941 Havens House in Berkeley, Harris had become what Bruno Zevi called a "prophet" of organic architecture; in Zevi's view, Frank Lloyd Wright remained the "god."[1] By the mid-1950s, Harris and Parker were both working with *House Beautiful* as Pace Setter architects. Though they worked on opposite coasts of the United States, they were united in the search for specific, regional expressions of modern architecture.

Harris, like many of his contemporaries and many of the Pace Setter architects, received no formal architectural training.[2] A Southern California native and the son of an architect, he discovered architecture as an "art" rather late in his education.[3] As a boy, Harris had paid little heed to his father's profession, yet he quickly developed an artist's sensibility.[4] In 1923, Harris enrolled at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles to study sculpture. He was drawn to modern artists, particularly to Paul Gauguin and Diego Rivera. While building his visual vocabulary of the modern movement in the arts, Harris began to explore the expressive possibilities of architecture. Through journals and

publications – most of them German – he developed a fascination with the expressionistic forms of Erich Mendelsohn. Though he was more interested in Mendelsohn's approach to three-dimensional space than to the constructional aspects of the architect's work, his intellectual curiosity had been sparked. It was, however, Harris's serendipitous discovery of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, and later of Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, that launched his career as an architect.[5]

Wright had been actively building in Los Angeles in the 1920s, completing his textile-block houses and Aline Barnsdall's Hollyhock House. Harris, likely because his interest lay in sculpture rather than in architecture, was for the most part unaware of the architect's work. His first introduction came through an Otis classmate, Ruth Sowden. Sowden and her husband had commissioned a home from Wright's son Lloyd Wright, and knew of the elder Wright's Los Angeles work. Sowden, aware of Harris's interest in sculptural form, encouraged him to visit Wright's Hollyhock House.[6] Harris's first visit to the house allowed him a first glimpse of the sculptural and dynamic qualities of Wright's work. As he discovered Wright's 1910 Wasmuth portfolio and Wendigen's publication of *The Life and Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*, he was captivated by the possibilities of modern architecture.[7] The visit to the Hollyhock House, in combination with Wright's seminal publications, became Harris's introduction to both modern American architecture and organic design.

Newly intrigued by developments in modern architecture, Harris changed his course of study. As he observed the vitality of the Los Angeles building scene, he

decided to enroll in the University of California at Berkeley's architecture program. In 1925, while still in Los Angeles, he discovered Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra's Jardinette Apartments under construction. He was at once reminded of Mendelsohn's captivating work, and thrilled to discover contemporary architecture that embodied the same spirit.[8] Harris, young and brave, found an address for Schindler and Neutra in the city phone directory. He was just twenty-five years old when he arrived unannounced on Schindler's door step at King's Road in Hollywood.[9]

At the King's Road house, Harris met both Schindler and Neutra. Unbeknownst to any of them, this was the beginning of Harris's architectural training. Neutra convinced him to abandon his plans for architecture school, and hired him to work, alongside Gregory Ain, on the Lovell Health House. Between 1927 and 1932, Harris's architectural education consisted of this apprenticeship, combined with informal design classes and lectures offered by Neutra at the Los Angeles Academy of Modern Art.[10] Though Harris left to form his own practice in 1933, Neutra's impact was significant. Schindler's presence was minimal, but Harris later recognized that Schindler's attitude toward specificity of circumstances and solutions had been ingrained.

In his early career, Harris struggled with the varied interpretations of modern architecture that he had encountered. Neutra was a constant presence. Images of the projects on which Harris work lingered: the Lovell House; Rush City Reformed (1926-1927); the Lehigh Portland Cement Company Airport Competition for Los Angeles; low-cost housing proposals presented to the CIAM III Congress of 1930; and Neutra's entry

for the Los Angeles installation of the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 International Style exhibition.[11] As Harris later recounted, his earliest independent commissions, such as the John Entenza house, were informed by Neutra, orthodox modernism, and to some degree, by Schindler; it was only after he broke from Neutra in 1933 that his early admiration for Wright began to manifest itself (Fig. 7.3).[12] Harris's reverence for Wright, tempered by his apprenticeship to Neutra, was particularly informative. Harris believed he drew inspiration from both men, and his built work demonstrated a synthesis rather than internal conflict. He had few commissions of his own in the 1930s, as the Depression brought construction activities to a halt. Harris's first executed project, the Lowe house dating 1933, was favorably received by the architectural press.[13] His own home in Fellowship Park was likewise recognized, and in 1937 won *House Beautiful*'s Small House Competition. In the same year, the Fellowship Park house bested Neutra's entry to win the Pittsburgh Glass Institute's Competition. By 1938, Harris began to garner national attention. His houses were regularly featured *Architectural Forum, Architectural Record, New York Beaux Arts Institute of Design Bulletin, Time, Pencil Points, Interiors, House & Garden, Better Homes & Gardens,* and, after 1943, in *House Beautiful*.[14]

Harris met Elizabeth Gordon in 1943. Harris's work came to her attention, possibly through James Marston Fitch, and she approached Harris to allow *House Beautiful* to publish the Havens House.[15] Harris agreed, and the house appeared in the magazine's August 1944 issue, with an introduction by the noted designer T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings.[16] The Havens House, more so than anything Harris had designed to

that date, departed from his orthodox modernist roots. Best represented by Man Ray's iconic photo, the house obliterated the "static box" and became the embodiment of what Bruno Zevi described as "horizontal, vertical and diagonal dynamism" (Fig 7.2).[17] Gordon recognized the unique quality of Harris's work, and the Havens House was promoted in the magazine as "good modern." Gordon upheld the work as unostentatious, structurally honest, flexible, and completely lacking the "fish bowl" effect of many modern homes.[18] With this house, she believed that Harris had achieved individual expression without resorting to whimsical devices or architectural fetish. In short, Harris provided exactly the kind of domestic prototype that Gordon sought; the Havens house exemplified modernity and "better living."

Harris's relationship with *House Beautiful* was further cemented through his wife, Jean Murray Bangs.[19] Bangs, who had a background in economics, labor politics, and social work, had developed a keen interest in the history of architecture. She was first introduced modern architecture partially through her acquaintance with Pauline and Rudolph Schindler, and Richard Neutra (whom she met years before she met Harris); like Pauline Schindler, Bangs began to write pieces for *California Arts & Architecture*.[20] After she and Harris married, and particularly after she became involved with his architectural practice, her publishing activities increased substantially. Gordon learned of Bangs's interest and ability, and by 1950, she was a regular contributor to *House Beautiful*.[21]

Most of Bangs's research and writing, outside of that which promoted her husband's career, concerned early twentieth-century American architecture. Her first major research project involved Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957). Bangs was familiar with his work from her student days in Berkeley, where Maybeck had designed a number of notable buildings. In 1940, when she and Harris were in Berkeley to oversee the construction of the Haven house, she was introduced to him through one of Harris's construction supervisors. With the intention of writing a book, Bangs began to interview the retired architect.[22] Though she never published the manuscript in full, she did collect enough material to support numerous essays.[23] Her second research project, suggested by another of Harris's colleagues, involved the then-forgotten work of Greene and Greene.[24] In 1948, at the behest of Howard Meyers of *Architectural Forum,* she wrote one of the first postwar articles on the Greene brothers.[25] Bangs's work led the public to rediscover their viability, and through her essays, the Greenes re-emerged as key figures in the development of early twentieth-century American architecture. Her inquiry had a profound impact on Harris's designs and theory.[26] With her growing expertise, Bangs was able to contribute substantially to *House Beautiful*'s architectural content, writing on themes of naturalism, and particularly on the American tradition of modern design as passed down through Maybeck, Greene and Greene, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Harris.[27]

Through the influence of Bangs, Gordon, and tangentially of Wright, Harris began to move away from the allegiance he had to Neutra and to the orthodox modernism of his early years. Harris's contact with Gordon drew him slowly into the growing controversy

between organic architecture and the International Style. Though Bangs was more vocal, she and Harris both began to view the International Style as an 'attack on the individual.'[28] As Harris's biographer Lisa Germany asserts, after his brief stay in New York during 1943, Harris began to "speak more about his American roots, about democracy, about the individual [and] demonstrate the depth of his devotion to Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright."[29] In 1944, Harris and Bangs left New York to return to a booming practice in California. He spent the next six years exploring ideas raised by Bangs, and struggling to synthesize the lessons of Maybeck, Greene and Greene, Wright, Neutra, and Schindler. By this time, Harris was convinced of the compatibility between modern design and specific regional expression.

Harris became the dean of the newly-formed School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin in 1954; in this year, he delivered a decisive address to the Northwest Regional Council of the AIA.[30] It was here, and in his subsequent essay published in *Architectural Record*, that he coined the term "regionalism of liberation."[31] Harris viewed the idea of architectural specificity – particular design solutions generated by a response to individual and regional concerns – as a new generative power in modern architecture. He denied that regional architecture arose only out of the forces of "climate, geography, [or] the presence or absence of certain materials;" he argued instead that "regionalism is a state of mind." Like many California modernists (such as Cliff May) and critics (like Gordon), Harris argued that modernism expressed an attitude rather than simply an aesthetic. In both his speech and subsequent essay, Harris distinguished a

'Regionalism of Restriction" from a "Regionalism of Liberation." The former, argued Harris, resulted from isolation, ignorance, and the urge to preserve outmoded local idioms. He viewed the later as the "manifestation of a region that is especially in tune with the emerging thought of the time." [32] Harris believed that for a liberated regionalism to emerge and spread, a large amount of building needed to occur at one time, much as California had expanded in the first decade following World War II. It was this large-scale development, argued Harris, that enabled a regionalism of liberation to be "sufficiently general, sufficiently varied, [and] sufficiently forceful to capture people's imaginations" and encourage new design trends.[33] The vitality of regional design, in Harris's conception, was that it was "more than ordinarily aware and more than ordinarily free," but most significantly, this meant it could become flexible and widely applicable.[34] In Harris's regionalism of liberation, restrictions no longer dictated architectural form. The "most important [regional] resources," in Harris's view, were not the limitations imposed in certain areas, but the potential within "its free minds, its imagination, its stake in the future, its energy and, last of all, its climate, its topography and the particular kind of sticks and stones it has to build with."[35]

This adamant belief in the value of individual creativity, and specificity over generality was reflected in Harris's design for the Texas State Fair, a project that would become *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1955. This Pace Setter was the result of an unusual collaboration (Fig. 7.4). Harris first conceived the project as a Texas State Fair exhibition for "all-electric living," to be sponsored by General Electric and Dallas Power

& Light. As the dean and a professor at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Architecture, he envisioned the Fair project as an ideal opportunity not for his own career advancement, but for pedagogical experimentation.

Passionate about reform in architectural education, he chose to make the exhibition house a collaborative project for a group of advanced design students at the University of Texas. Though Harris was responsible for the overall design, each student took responsibility for a portion of the project. Six architecture students formed the studio team: David Barrow, Jr., Don Legge, William Hoff, Neil T. Lacey, Patrick Chumney and Haldor Nielsen.[36] Though Lacey was only involved in the semester-long studio course, he documented the design process from the point of conception to construction. His "diary of observations," which eventually took the form of a Master's Thesis (1955), provided insight from the viewpoint of designer, participant, and observer.[37] Through Lacey's recollections, rather than Harris's own, the process of creating the exhibition house fully emerged.

Harris's studio group was in mid-design when Elizabeth Gordon selected the project as *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter. Harris, the student designers, the original sponsors, and *House Beautiful* agreed to share the venture. They agreed that *House Beautiful* would serve as the client, interior decorator, photographer and publicist; Harris and his students would act as the architects. General Electric and the Dallas Power Company would contribute all of the electric appliances. Thus, the goals of GE, DP&L, and Harris's studio were merged with that of Gordon's Pace Setter crusade.[38] By early

1954, the Texas State Fair House was transformed into *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1955 (Fig. 7.5; 7.6).

Harris's design method revealed a crucial theme consistent with new organic design: the clear expression of concepts and intentions.[39] Although the Pace Setter was an idealized exhibition house, it was also meant to contend with the realities of the contemporary housing market. This paralleled one of *House Beautiful*'s main priorities: common sense design. For Harris, the definition of the architectural problem was of utmost importance – whether it be client needs or market trends. In this house, his parameters encompassed regional traditions and aesthetic expressions, regional climate, topography and microclimate of the specific site, and the requirements of the individual client. The later posed an immediate difficulty: the 1955 Pace Setter House was a model home on display, with no actual client. Harris's student, Neal Lacey, documented the challenge of designing an idealized house for an imaginary client whose needs were derived from "statistical averages." Lacey, influenced by Harris's teaching, wrote that "the average has no consistency of pattern, it embraces all people and is therefore an amalgamation, not complete but too diverse."[40] Harris and his team of students all firmly believed that in order for the project to be successful, the Pace Setter must solve real problems for real people.

Rather than designing for the "average" or the universal client, Harris and his student team found specificity by imagining the family around which the house could evolve. The invented 1955 Pace Setter family consisted of two parents and two sons aged

eight and ten (the family would later include a daughter).[41] As was typical for 1955, the Pace Setter family was expected to carry out their domestic duties without domestic aid. Though the family would seldom have overnight guests, they belonged to a socio-economic group that would entertain frequently, and so required an "extensive and rather ample house in every respect."[42] The parents were well-educated, and the entire family had an array of home-based hobbies. As Harris well knew, these descriptors represented the demographic that *House Beautiful* had been trying to reach for an entire decade of the 1950s.[43]

With the problem of the client solved, the design team faced the challenge siting. The program required that they erect a full-scale and complete house on the Texas State Fair Grounds. Though the house was meant as part of the Fair's public exhibition, Harris and his team did not want the project to be negatively impacted by these limiting circumstance. Thus, they approached the site as if it was a typical a residential lot, in a typical suburban setting.[44] The State Fair Grounds in Dallas, an urban site with few suburban amenities, provided a specific set of challenges. The house was situated on the Fair Grounds as if it were within a development tract, but given a larger-than-average building site, approximately 250 feet by 250 feet. The Fair site was transformed into a corner suburban lot, bounded on the north and south by imagined city streets (Fig. 7.6).

Though the conditions were unusual for domestic construction, the topography and microclimate of the Fair Grounds were not. Because climatic considerations were crucial to Harris's concept of a regionalism of liberation, consideration of the home's

environment was a high priority. Particularly in the hot and humid climate of north Texas, proper orientation was of paramount importance. Using *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control Data, the design team conducted specific research into the region's micro-climate. Intense sun and heat became the largest concern, and the group endeavored to create as many natural climatic devices as possible. The goal was to design a house that could seamlessly integrate with its climatic environment, and could efficiently and passively reduce the load on the home's necessary mechanical systems.

In addition to addressing climatic controls, Harris wanted to maintain "evidence of a pattern of living" that would invoke personal identity of the supposed client. The house that evolved was attentive to these concerns; the Pace Setter publicly expressed individuality of the client family, while retaining privacy and visual complexity within the design. The design team was adamant that the house should leave the viewer "convinced of the reality and validity of the total conception."[45]

Materials were a key component of the design, both in terms of its climatic responsiveness and its ability to convey warmth and personality. Harris insisted that although the Fair was ephemeral, the house should be constructed of permanent materials. This would lend the Pace Setter "a convincing look of substance and positive, permanent nature" (Fig. 7.7; 7.8).[46] By constructing a house to acceptable standards and building codes, Harris believed that once the Fair ended, he could re-sell the Pace Setter and relocate it to a permanent site. His insistence on quality paid off, and at the close of the Fair, the house was sold, dissembled, and moved.[47]

One of the few concessions to the demonstrational nature of the house involved the issue of circulation (Fig. 7.9; 7.10). Because the house would be on exhibit, it had to accommodate an estimated 80,000 visitors over the span of one month. The design team expanded the interior space to accommodate the steady stream of traffic, and devised a circulation pattern that was sensible for the conceptual purpose, yet not atypical of domestic space.[48] The pattern of movement was directed, though the general atmosphere retained a sense of unencumbered and unhurried domestic life.

Once the Harris and his team defined the house's program and identified the basic design problems, they began to translate facts into forms. Aesthetically and formally, the Pace Setter for 1955 continued the lineage of the California ranch house, as developed by Harris in Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s. It recalled his Fellowship Park house, and with its skeletal framework, wide eaves, and exposed rafters, it suggested a Japanese influence. The house was large and sprawling, with an L-shaped plan closed at one end to form a rectangle. The Pace Setter turned its back to the public (for both privacy and shade), and embraced a generous courtyard. An innovative feature, suited to the automobile-oriented sprawl of Dallas, was the automobile court, which transformed the Pace Setter into "drive-in" house (Fig. 7.11). Harris provided a transition area that accommodated both cars and a series of entry activities. Though conventionally framed in wood and clad in redwood, a segment of the exterior was clad in stone, recalling the Texas tradition of masonry construction (Fig. 7.12). The exterior walls were shaded by deep overhanging eaves, yet Harris instilled a feeling of lightness with his introduction of

clerestory windows.[49] The interior plan was open, yet displayed interlocking spaces. Harris placed few barriers between indoors and outdoors, and extended space upward with high ceilings that followed the pitch of the roof.

The Pace Setter 1955, designed from the inside out, enclosed specific activities, and directly linked architectural form to functional requirements. At same time, Harris insured that the "total first impression" of the house was iterated throughout. Each interior space housed a specific activity, but continued of home's overall scheme of organization.[50]

Harris and two of his student collaborators, David Barrow Jr. and Don Legge, spent the summer of 1954 in Dallas to complete the detail drawings and supervise the construction of the Pace Setter. As Harris later testified, the biggest challenge completing such a large house on a schedule that would coincide with the State Fair's opening. While a project of this size would have typically required eight to fourteen months to complete, Dallas builder Joseph Maberry and his crew finished in "90 days using 16 to 20 carpenters at one time in addition to five laborers, two painters, six brick masons, three sheet metal workers, three insulation installers, four electricians, two glaziers."[51] Cooperation between the builders, supply companies, and fair officials was unparalleled.[52]

The Pace Setter 1955 revealed both Harris's design process, and the involvement and depth of *House Beautiful's* editorial policy. More importantly, differing conceptions of organic became readily apparent. With the Pace Setter for 1954, Alfred Browning

Parker offered a Wrightian interpretation that read as an expensive custom home (which, thanks to his own labor, was not as costly as it seemed). With the Pace Setter for 1955, Harris followed the spirit to Cliff May and the California ranch house. Harris's Pace Setter targeted a segment of the American population that might purchase a house of this type, in either California or Texas, or perhaps any other suburban area. With his project, Harris created a realistic model for modern living. His work followed the principles of organic architecture and the American Style in terms of accommodating the specificities of the client and site, prioritizing space, using natural materials, and eliminating all superfluous ornament.

*House Beautiful*'s involvement as the decorator of the project shifted the final appearance of the home away from what Harris might have conceived without collaboration. Decisions were made, presumably by John deKoven Hill, that were not aligned with Harris's own preferences. The magazine's participation, as student architect David Barrow Jr. later attested, affected the degree of simplicity that Harris would have instilled.[53] Many of the motifs within the Pace Setter reflect patterns and colors that were closely associated with Hill. In fact, Barrow asserted that the iconic front door was not in fact a Harris design, but was "Wrighted" by Hill.[54] The decorators infused the house with the organic concept of an integrated whole, yet depicted the reality of what *House Beautiful* believed the average consumer – the Texas State Fair audience – wanted in terms of fit and finish. And, like in Parker's Pace Setter for 1954, the creation of identifiable motifs and images, such as the Pace Setter 1955 front door, added an

irreplaceable layer of identity and personalization to what was essentially an understated mid-century ranch house. Thus, *House Beautiful*'s interference was part of their interpretation, and allowed them to address the larger issue of individualizing design in an increasingly generalized mass market.

Because the Pace Setter for 1955 had so many collaborators, from the University of Texas students to the *House Beautiful* staff, it was difficult to discern Harris's voice. The house made few new statements, but underscored the continuing national validity of the ideas and forms established in California years before.

**Vladimir Ossipoff and the Pace Setter for 1958**

With Harris's Pace Setter for 1955, the idea of regional modernism was transplanted successfully to Texas. In 1956, *House Beautiful* discovered another architect who had also achieved a unique regional expression: Vladimir Ossipoff, a Russian-born and Berkeley-trained architect practicing in Honolulu, Hawaii (Fig. 7.14).

Ossipoff was born in Vladivostok, Russia on 25 November 1907.[55] From age ten, he was raised in Tokyo, where his father was posted as a military attaché for the Imperial Army at the Russian Embassy.[56] Ossipoff's early years were marked by a varied cultural experience in both Russia and Japan. He traveled frequently between the two countries, and attained a broad education (and fluency in English) at St. Joseph's College and the Tokyo Foreign School, later re-named the American School. He was exposed to Japanese culture in both Tokyo and at his family's summer retreat near Mount Fuji; his intimate

exposure to Japanese life and language came through his Japanese nanny. In 1923, the Kanto Earthquake devastated Tokyo, and the Ossipoff family was forced to flee the country. Though it had long been the elder Ossipoff's intention to immigrate to America, as evidenced the children's education at English-language schools, the decision to abandon Japan was likely hastened by natural disaster. In the fall of 1923, the family boarded a ship from Kobe bound for the United States, via Yokohama and Hawaii. They were forced to leave Ossipoff's father behind, and he died tragically in Japan before he could re-join his family. The newly widowed Mrs. Ossipoff settled with her children in Berkeley, California. They quickly assimilated to an American way of life: Ossipoff graduated from high school in 1926, and received a degree in architecture from the University of California in 1931.[57] He worked briefly for a Los Angeles architect, then for the San Francisco firm of Crim, Reasing and McGinnis. After his short apprenticeships, Ossipoff embarked on a trip to Hawaii to visit his former high school classmate and college roommate Douglas Slaten.[58] Slaten encouraged Ossipoff to remain in the islands, convinced of the abundance of opportunities available for a young man just beginning a design career. Ossipoff, too saw potential in Hawaii, and found employment at several established architectural firms in Honolulu, many of which were headed by California-trained Americans.[59]

In 1936, only five years out of architecture school, Ossipoff formed his own architecture firm, Vladimir Ossipoff, AIA (later, Ossipoff and Associates).[60] He enjoyed a successful practice, building for Clare Boothe Luce, Linus Pauling Jr. (his Round Top

House was an award-winner), the Pacific Outrigger Canoe Club, the Thurston Memorial Chapel at Punahou Schools, the Hawaii Preparatory Academy, the University of Hawaii, and IBM. While he did not specialize in domestic architecture, he did complete a large number of suburban homes around Honolulu; these works in particular received attention within the mainland American architectural press.[61]

Ossipoff's work, the majority of which was executed in Hawaii, was both specifically regional and a reflection of broader trends in American architecture. As the architect Harry W. Seckel established in his book *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (1954), Ossipoff's architecture fit squarely within the broad architectural milieu of Hawaii, yet suggested an enduring link to external trends.[62] Seckel's account, which provided context for Ossipoff's designs, demonstrated that Hawaiian architects endeavored to develop a unique regional architecture that transcended creative isolation. These architects, whether native or immigrant, struggled to place themselves within the duality of Hawaiian identity: Hawaii, as a place and as a culture, was poised between independence and dependence. Hawaii retained its character as an insular culture and formerly independent nation, yet simultaneously assumed its status as a territory and extension of the United States.[63]

Within the context of Hawaiian architecture at mid-century, Seckel's writings revealed a real tension between those who integrated with a broad American design culture, and those who maintained a separate Hawaiian identity. Yet, as Seckel argued, Hawaiians tried to be "socially, politically, and emotionally" American. Hawaiian

architecture, particularly public buildings, found itself well within a decidedly American tradition. Architects practicing in Hawaii in the first decades of the twentieth centure were decidedly influenced by high-style architecture of the eastern United States; by the middle of the century, western trends (linked to developments in California) with "oriental" inflections rose to prominence.[64] With the campaign for Hawaiian statehood (achieved in August 1959), designers who were creating an architectural image for Hawaii had a vested interested in establishing a cohesiveness. They feared being identified in the architectural press and profession as an "other." Yet these same architects, Ossipoff included, were equally interested in marking the distinct identity of Hawaii. Specifically, this group advocated the creation of a "Hawaiian idiom," if only for the Hawaiian dwelling. According to Seckel, vernacular architecture in Hawaii should have developed in regard to its isolation, native materials, economic conditions (cost of labor and extreme expense of land), climate (mild but with many microclimates), varied topographical setting, and culture. Seckel argued – perhaps controversially – that these factors failed to influence Hawaiian architecture in any dominant way.

Yet Seckel recognized a crucial force in the formation of Hawaiian residential architecture: "environmental living." As he described, the "island attitude" had generated a certain kind of lifestyle, and thus given rise to a responsive domestic architecture. The "perpetual summer" of Hawaii fed a way of life that was relaxed, unhurried, and "casual even to the point of indifference." Even with this dominant culture of ease, argued Seckel, Hawaiians inherited living habits, specifically from the United States eastern

seaboard, that were not designed for their environment. Until the 1940s, according to his assessment, Hawaiians did not have a type of house that was particularly suited to Hawaiian life.[65]

Ossipoff was one of the few Hawaiian architects who answered this architectural challenge. He fully embraced the effort to create a regional yet modern Hawaiian house. Ossipoff's Liljestrand House in Honolulu, selected as *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1958, exhibited his primary architectural concerns and design strategies. He designed the house in 1952, not specifically under the sponsorship of *House Beautiful*, but for Howard Liljestrand and his family (Fig. 7.15).

Liljestrand (1911-2004), a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and his wife Helen commissioned the house for themselves and their four children. The Liljestrands were a large and active family; they traveled extensively and pursued a number of space-intensive hobbies, including photography, movie making, woodworking, and automobile restoration.[66] Given their lifestyle, they had an extensive list of programmatic needs. First and foremost, they wanted a home of unusual quality and livability. They shunned pretension, and prized the magnificent landscape of Hawaii and their chosen building site above Honolulu, on Mount Tantalus (Fig. 7.16). They firmly believed in the "emotional power of architecture to give meaning to life," and pursued a "sprit-lifting" quality in their home.[67] The family sought functional solutions that could be solved with imagination, and a house that could accommodate their family life, hobbies, and possessions. The Liljestrands prioritized access to the natural environment, and hoped for

a design that seamlessly incorporated views, light, breezes, and an expansive sense of space.

Ossipoff had established a reputation for sensitive and high-quality design, and he was the architect of choice for the Liljestrands. They wanted to remain involved in the design process, and subscribed to the idea that "it takes three people to make a good house: a capable architect, an intelligent and understanding client, and a competent contractor."[68] If the Liljestrands wished to exert control over the solution of practical matters, they were willing to leave the aesthetic choices to their architect.

In the Liljestrand House, which in 1958 became *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter, Ossipoff was attentive to several key themes: siting; climatic response; interior space; simplicity of design (which he traced to Japanese influence); preference for natural materials; individual needs (physical and psycho-emotional); and artistic expression. The temperate climate of Hawaii encouraged him to develop a plan that could accommodate indoor-outdoor living, while addressing climatic challenges offered by an often humid environment. He carefully sited the house to afford the best views and to benefit from the area's microclimate, specifically prevailing breezes (a source of cross-ventilation). Ossipoff paid equally close attention the exterior package: he inserted the house into a hillside, thus offering only a small portion of the exterior façade to the public street. The public elevation was relatively closed, marked only by a port-cochere at the end of the circular driveway (Fig. 7.17). The private side of the house, long and narrow, was fully glazed to allow the inhabitants full access to the outdoors, both physically and visually.

Ossipoff designed the interior according to a masterful circulation plan that hinged upon "spines" of movement. Space was the major protagonist. Ossipoff achieved the perception of spaciousness through a fluid suggestion of circulation, and through physical actualization of certain architectural elements such as open, heightened ceilings and expansive, "vanishing" window walls (Fig. 7.18). Though the plan was linear and one unit deep, it contained "pivot points" around which space rotated.[69] To take full advantage of the site, views, and prevailing breezes, the interior opened upon a lanai (Fig. 7.19; 7.20).

With the Liljestrand family, careful programming was requisite. Ossipoff zoned the house into activity areas to accommodate several purposes, some conceived as "double-acting facilities serving opposite directions."[70] Though activities might overlap, Ossipoff provided discreet spaces for specific moods; for example, to retain a sense of solitude and privacy, the master suite and Howard Liljestrand's study were physically removed from the more public areas of the house (Fig. 7.21). Yet, spaces still were linked and interrelated, often through visual means. Indoor-outdoor relationships, for example, were open yet controlled.

Craftsmanship was a prime consideration for both the Liljestrands and their architect. Ossipoff generally employed well-trained craftsmen of Japanese descent, who were dedicated to quality and workmanship. The craft tradition in the Liljestrand house was evident not only in the architectural package, but in the furniture and fittings, from cabinetry, to built-in furniture, to custom-made pieces. Quality was underscored in the

use of fine native materials, such as monkey pod wood, which evoked a sense of matured natural beauty (Fig. 7.22).

With Ossipoff and the Pace Setter for 1958, *House Beautiful* demonstrated that the principles of the American Style could broadly accommodate the individualism or specificity of nearly any region, including exotic and remote locations such as Hawaii. The Japanese and pan-Asian influence injected a particular vitality. As the decade of the 1950s closed, the essential themes of postwar modern design were securely in place. For *House Beautiful* and the Pace Setter architects, these themes encompassed a humanistic and organic approach that continually looked backward, forward, inward and outward. By the time the United States annexed Hawaii as its fiftieth state, it became apparent than, just as it had done in the 1930s, American modern design would again look beyond the country's political borders.

## Chapter VIII: "The Natural Progression of Things"

Frank Lloyd Wright died in April 1959. The architectural community mourned an iconoclast, who, after nearly seventy years, finally found public acceptance (Fig. 8.1).[1] He left behind extraordinary commercial and public buildings, from the Johnson Wax complex to the Guggenheim Museum, but it was his domestic work that captured the postwar imagination. His Usonian houses provided a model for postwar architects from both inside and outside of Taliesin who were not looking for a style to copy, but a set of guiding principles. As the tension between functionalist and humanist architecture again surfaced in the 1940s, Wright's advocacy of organic design provided a viable path, though at times obscure, to an alternative modern architecture. His individualism provided a much-needed antidote for modern architecture well into the 1960s. As Wright's shadow passed, his successors struggled to come to terms with his legacy, and to reframe modern organic design in a way that moved beyond Wright.

In October 1959, six months after Wright's death, *House Beautiful* published "Your Legacy from Frank Lloyd Wright," an issue of the magazine completely dedicated to the architect's achievements. The editors not only praised his life's work, but argued that his ideas could still direct the future of American architecture. The *House Beautiful* architecture editors, of whom two former Taliesin Fellows – John deKoven Hill and

Curtis Besinger – were the most prominent, adamantly believed that a new generation of designers could achieve what Wright had always sought.[2]

Three aspects of Wright's organic theory continued to resonate after his death: a concern for the space within (an extension of the idea of architectural liberation); the importance of individual character (architectural and personal); and design integrity. In the realm of residential architecture, Wright kept the idea of shelter central, but attempted to remove the feeling of "spiritual confinement."[3] Architects who looked to Wright for inspiration did the same, specifically by eliminating the physical confinement of interior space. As Elizabeth Gordon wrote, "to Wright, architecture was never an outside form that contained space. Rather it was *the space within* that was the true architectural reality. The exterior should be merely an expression of it."[4] In this model of design, the envelope of the home was erased, and the conventional domestic box vanished. The barrier between interior and exterior was erased so that interior space could extend outward into the landscape, and the exterior could penetrate traditional living spaces. On the interior, the space within flowed not only horizontally toward the exterior, but vertically toward the sky. The space within, in Wrightian terms, was dynamic.

In *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House for 1959, published two months before Wright's death, architect Alfred Browning Parker again proved that Wright's legacy continued intact (Fig. 8.2).[5] This Pace Setter, Parker's third in the series, turned inward upon itself, so that its "external form [was] only an enclosure of its interior space."[6] The blank façade was deceptively simple, distinguished only by two roof planes and a band of

clerestory windows. The theme in this house was "inner-space."[7] Parker planned the house from the inside out, and the design emanated from a central interior court or atrium. He enabled space to flow outward from this center, uninhibited, connecting to all rooms within the house.[8] He created a continuous horizontal plane by linking contiguous rooms, widening or eliminating doorways, reducing floor surfaces to a single level, and using compatible materials and colors throughout (Fig. 8.3).[9] While a sense of spatial unity was achieved, the atrium remained the "heart" of house, replacing the traditional hearth. The atrium, with a swimming pool at its center, became the space from which all others radiate. The sense of direction and movement was guided by large square piers (which also provided storage) and the outward swing of Parker's signature architectural element, the louvered door or *persiana*.

As with all Parker's Pace Setter houses, the space within the Pace Setter for 1959 flowed both horizontally and vertically. The real interest was overhead, in the diamond-structure of the atrium screen, and in the ceilings of the private spaces (Fig. 8.4). The simple modulation of space, varied by ceiling heights and accentuated by the contrast of light (the atrium) and dark (the sheltered outer rooms), added a subtle element of stimulation. As Wright had suggested, Parker demonstrated the viability of design in the third dimension of architectural depth.

In Wright's later work, he achieved plasticity and continuity by curving space and obliterating the right angle.[10] Though some architects, particularly those trained at Taliesin, employed similar methods, others, like Parker, achieved plasticity through

visually simpler means. In the Pace Setter for 1959, for example, he used the diagonal line as both the generator of spatial movement, and as a design motif. Movement was not suggested, but integral.[11] The right-angle and square corners remained intact, but Parker emphasized the longer diagonal dimension. Space never stopped suddenly. It never turned abruptly. By removing conventional corners, Parker connected spaces, and encouraged the eye to travel freely throughout the house; the view was never "trapped in a corner where wall meets wall unless it [was] with an intentional encircling protective movement."[12] The diagonal emphasis imparted a sense of expansiveness, allowing this average-sized house with an average number of rooms to seem "spacious in a truly modern sense."[13] Just as Wright instilled his own "sense of liberation" into architecture, so did Parker; as *House Beautiful* wrote, "this liberation is not so much in the material form of the building as it is in the effect it has as an environment upon those living in it."[14] Certainly, Parker's clients enjoyed a sense of freedom within this flexible and dynamic Pace Setter house.

The final lesson to be taken from Wright, as Parker had already demonstrated many times over, was the establishment of design integrity. For Parker, this required the integration of building, furnishings, setting and environment into an architectural whole. These elements would be further unified by Parker's effort to establish a theme that would radiate through the entire work. As with his previous Pace Setters, here, Parker used the repetition of two architectural elements: the diagonal, as utilized first in the atrium roof and second in spatial dispensation; and the rectangle, as used in the major

support piers. Both of these elements were dominant architectural features, and simultaneously became the home's decorative motif. The rectangle motif, inspired by the storage piers, was transformed into an abstract textile pattern, which was integrated into custom-made sheets and towels (Fig. 8.5). Parker further established integrity by limiting the types of materials used throughout the house, much as Wright had always urged in his theory of organic design. Parker carefully selected only natural materials used according to their nature, though both Parker and *House Beautiful* recognized that in some cases, the use of natural materials could be interpreted as rustic; yet, as the magazine argued, "the Wrightian way is the opposite of rustic. It means living in a cultivated and cultured way -- not camping."[15]

Parker's Pace Setter for 1959 underscored the flexibility of the concept of organic architecture, and indicated a new direction for the coming decade. Parker, like Wright, explored complex geometries as a means to animate the space within, and to expand space in every dimension. Yet Parker's house pushed the limits and moved far beyond the Wrightian aesthetic.

Parker's Pace Setter for 1959 was completed and published shortly before Wright died. The themes explored within the house were prescient: it was as if Parker, and *House Beautiful* in their interpretation of the house, sensed that an era was ending. Upon the architect's death, it became apparent that many architects, and indeed *House Beautiful*, would need to contend with Wright's legacy and the void that his passing left.

**John deKoven Hill and the Pace Setter for 1960: Eulogy to Frank Lloyd Wright**

With John deKoven Hill's 1960 Pace Setter, *House Beautiful* published a sincere eulogy to Frank Lloyd Wright (Fig. 8.6). Hill was logically chosen to design the first Pace Setter published after Wright's death, not only because he was Gordon's most valued architecture editor and had been the magazine's in-house organic designer since 1953, but because he came directly from the Taliesin fellowship (Fig. 8.7). The 1960 Pace Setter took Wright as its point of departure, but Hill's skilled interpretation proved that precedent did not guarantee replication. Hill's Pace Setter asserted that Wright's legacy remained intact.

John deKoven Hill was born in 1920 in Cleveland, Ohio to John deKoven Hill, Sr. and Helen Muckley Hill.[16] He spent most of his youth in the suburbs of Chicago, first in Wilmette and later in Evanston, where he developed a strong interest in architecture, encouraged by his architect uncle John Gillette.[17] In the Chicago area, Hill had great access to architecture; he had taken particular note of the Georgian and nineteenth-century character of his neighborhood in Evanston, though he had no particular recollection of the nearby buildings by Wright or Walter Burley Griffin.

Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition in 1933 made a lasting impression on him, and marked his first reaction to architecture and the beginning of his desire to pursue an alternative mode of design. [18] Hill later recounted that he originally intended to enroll at the University of Virginia, but upon his father's encouragement, contacted Wright at Taliesin to inquire about the newly-formed school of architecture. At age 18 – only a few

weeks after his high school graduation – Hill became the youngest among Wright's Taliesin Fellowship. [19]

Hill spent four years as a student-apprentice at Taliesin. Like many of the other apprentices, his early access to Wright was limited. He learned from the older apprentices, such as Wes Peters (who taught him engineering), John Howe (who taught him to draw), and Eugene Masselink (who taught him about texture and color).[20] Hill displayed an innate talent for artistic composition, and, with Cornelia Brierly, began to pursue an interest in interior design.[21] By 1941, Hill was still "learning by doing," as was the Wrightian pedagogical model, but he had been promoted to the position of senior apprentice and paid draftsman.[22] Wright discouraged him from proceeding as an architect (and getting a license) to pursue his talent for interiors.[23] Hill's sharp sense of style and his easy manner made him a favorite of Wright's, and for nearly a decade, he worked closely with the architect.[24]

Hill's professional break came in 1952, when Wright sent him with Oscar Stonorov to oversee the installation of *Sixty Years of Living Architecture* in Mexico City at the National Autonomous University.[25] In early 1953, Hill dismounted the show and began construction of the next installment in New York, on the future site of Wright's Guggenheim Museum. It was at this precise moment that Elizabeth Gordon needed a new architectural editor, and, in the wake of her controversial "Threat to the Next America" essay of April 1953, wanted to strengthen her ties to Wright. Wright knew Hill was getting restless at Taliesin, and believed a brief sabbatical in New York would provide

him with the needed respite and an opportunity to expand his professional experience. When Gordon cabled Wright for a suggestion of a candidate to replace James Marston Fitch, who had just resigned, Wright recommended Hill.[26] Though Hill had virtually no experience in the field of journalism, Gordon was impressed with his architectural background, and hired him.[27] Hill thought he would work at *House Beautiful* for one year; he was there for ten. Gordon was thrilled, and Wright was pleased to have someone on the "inside" to further the cause of organic architecture.

Hill became an indispensable part of the *House Beautiful* staff, not only as an architectural editor, but as an in-house designer. His experience with Wright, and his particular sensitivity to organic design proved invaluable.[28] He also became a close friend and collaborator for Gordon. Though she often credited Hill as the "brains" behind the 1950s *House Beautiful* issues, she still generated most of the story ideas and guided the magazine's editorial content. Hill believed he merely "produced the evidence of what [Gordon] was trying to do and show."[29] His contribution, however, amounted to far more: Hill was increasingly responsible for the artistic direction of the magazine. Soon after he joined the magazine, Hill and *House Beautiful* launched an active design studio. With draftsman Gair Sloan, who had trained under Aaron Green in San Francisco, a decorating staff led by Laura Tanner, and numerous craftsmen on call, Hill's office produced at least a quarter of what *House Beautiful* photographed and published between 1953 and his departure in 1963.[30] By 1956, Gordon and Hill had formed a freelance design partnership, Joël Design Projects Company. Under Joël, with Hill assuming the name Hayes

Alexander, they produced a line of fabrics for Schumacher, interiors for Wright's Tonkens House in Cincinnati, and a line of furnishings for Heritage Henredon.[31]

When Wright died in 1959, Hill felt he should return to Taliesin. But, upon careful consideration and encouragement from his former Taliesin colleagues, he realized he could "serve the cause of organic architecture" better from his position at *House Beautiful.*[32] Hill's decision to remain in New York was crucial, and his subsequent designs proved the perfect tribute and forecast of the future of organic design.

In 1957, Hill was commissioned to design a house for J. Ralph Corbett in Cincinnati, Ohio (Fig. 8.8).[33] Corbett, a long-time friend of *House Beautiful* staffer Julie Polshek and the owner of the NuTone Company, had been a major advertising client for nearly two decades (Fig. 8.9).[34] Because of his close contact with *House Beautiful*, he must have known that Hill was actively producing interiors and exhibition spaces featured in the magazine, and was certainly aware of the Pace Setter House Program. Corbett approached Gordon and Hill, with an idea and an ideal lot. By 1959, the house was underway, and it had been selected as *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1960.

Relative newcomers to Cincinnati, Corbett and his wife Patricia were the perfect client for a new kind of modern house.[35] In conversations with Hill, they expressed their desire for a home that stood outside of convention and design tradition, yet expressed quality and good design. As the head of a successful corporation, Corbett wanted a house that was appropriate to his status, and ultimately, his success. He had a profound interest in performing arts – Patricia was a professional musician – and together, they had built a

large collection of fine art. Given their particular needs, from rehearsal and performance space, to areas for entertaining, to display and storage space for artwork, Hill was faced with a complex programmatic challenge (Fig. 8.10).

From start to finish, the house was designed as a Pace Setter. Hill, known for his exceptional taste, artistic sensibility, and creative spatial concepts, was the ideal architect. He was able to balance the Corbetts' specific needs with those of the magazine, and those of major advertisers who donated building supplies and décor *gratis*. While the design process and construction were underway, Hill made several trips to Cincinnati, but the project was generally supervised from *House Beautiful*'s New York office. John W. Geiger and Paul L. Soderburg were associate architects; Gair Sloan was the head draftsman and superintendent; and local architect Thomas Landise, Jr. applied his name to the drawings and shepherded the plans through the city approval process.

Corbett had acquired a large tract of land in a well-established and prestigious neighborhood on the outskirts of Cincinnati. The lot was large, and had stunning views of the Ohio River Valley. This greatly appealed to Hill's sense of organic siting. Taking his cue from Wright, he chose to position the Pace Setter house at the brow of the hill, rather than atop (as the original house on the site had been) (Fig. 8.11). The plan of the house extended lengthwise across the lot, and paralleled the course of the river below (Fig. 8.12; 8.13). It was compactly planned and provided large areas of indoor and outdoor living spaces, including an enclosed pool. Framed in steel, the house was conceived as a roofed pavilion, punctuated by ample skylights and window-walls. The pavilion roof,

clad in Alcoa standing-seam aluminum, was supported on masonry piers (reinforced concrete faced with limestone) (Fig. 8.14).[36] The overall exterior envelope lent a sense of shelter, security, and privacy, yet provided enough transparency to remain unrestrictive. With Hill's skillful planning and his of apt use fenestration and lighting, the house moved beyond its walls. It extended into the landscape by means of extensive patios and terraces, and, at the site of the connected apartment unit, through the device of the *porte-cochere* (Fig. 8.15).

Hill's Pace Setter was the pinnacle of architectural integrity. The house illustrated an inclusive and organic approach to design: every architectural and decorative element, and the clients' way of life were considered. Both were combined to create a work of art; and, as *House Beautiful* indicated, nothing was detached from "everyday life." The house was a synthesis of all crafts, a true *Gesamkunstwerk*.[37] Hill wrote of his design: "Here is a fusion of technological advantages with emotional values: a synthesis of the practical and the aesthetic with no sacrifice of either. Mechanization has *not* taken command, but is kept in a proper supporting role."[38]

Architecturally, two themes dominated: the space within (including visual movement), and integrated design of furnishings, fittings, ornament and pattern. Hill achieved dynamism with his interior, particularly in the most public areas. Space flowed outward in the living areas, and upward at light tower. Continuity and freedom of movement were crucial, and he clearly had learned his lessons from Wright's concept of space as plastic and flowing.[39] Like Wright, Hill sought to provide a sense of enclosure

and shelter, yet alleviate the feeling of spatial and psychological confinement. He artfully mastered this in the entry tower, a tall shaft capped by a sky dome (Fig. 8.16). Elsewhere on the interior, Hill emphasized upward motion by installing ceilings to follow the contour of the roof. This was in part possible because he eliminated the attic space and the left structural beams exposed. Within the remaining public spaces, there were no sharply defined limits or barriers, and rarely any closed corners.[40]

Hill established a rhythm for the house through the method of the module; an eighteen-inch module served as the basic unit of design upon which all else was based. With this unit in place, the theme of the rectangle dominated many of the finishes, from the concrete floor surfaced with ceramic tile, to the paneled wall surfaces (Fig. 8.17). The repetition of the rectangle provided unity, while simultaneously allowed layers, depth, texture, light and shadow. Horizontality was emphasized on both the exterior and the interior, in part by the choice of rectilinear building materials, such as the cut Indiana limestone laid in a random pattern and protruding segments.

Hill's decorative cast aluminum grillwork was perhaps the most striking architectural element within the Pace Setter for 1960 (Fig. 8.18; 8.19). He designed the pattern – rather Sullivanesque – to be non-directional, and the individual units were combinable in any manner necessary. Other patterns for the Pace Setter, seen in the wallpaper and fabric collections designed by Hill and made Schumacher, were all derived from this one basic motif (Fig. 8.20; 8.21).[41] Hill integrated these patterns into surface finishes, including the kitchen countertops clad in locally-made Formica (Fig. 8.22).[42]

The custom furniture for the home, designed by Hill and manufactured by Henredon, repeated the Pace Setter motif, and simultaneously hinted at an "oriental" influence (Fig. 8.23).

The Pace Setter for 1960 was a true masterpiece and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Hill's greatest achievement as a designer. Though his own creative impulse was apparent, he struggled to distinguish himself from Wright. With the completion of this Pace Setter, and particularly with the death of Wright, the organic line risked coming to a complete stall. Hill and *House Beautiful*, by 1960, were looking for a new source of inspiration.

### ***Shibui*: Beauty in Living**

The Pace Setter 1960, with its lines of complimentary furnishings and fabrics, was enormously successful. It was a masterful example of organic design, but Gordon and Hill both felt that "in this period…design is in a vacuum – on a dead center." [43] Particularly in Wright's absence, organic design needed a larger purpose, a more expansive frame of reference. Gordon began to look toward for what she believed were universal sources of design for new inspiration. She was particularly stimulated by Asian cultures, which, as she noted, had long been upheld as respected "producers of beauty."[44] Gordon, like Wright before her, believed that the Japanese in particular possessed a keen awareness, or "sensitivity to things, [and] subtlety of discrimination" (Fig. 8.24). In Gordon's view, the Japanese knew how to achieve beauty, and had acquired "a whole language for talking about it and ranking it." [45] In August 1960, shortly after Hill's Pace

Setter was published, Gordon introduced Americans to the Japanese aesthetic language of "*shibui"* (Fig. 8.25).[46]

For Gordon and her public, *shibui* offered a set of principles that both encompassed and moved beyond the concerns of modern design. *Shibui*, as Gordon discovered, encompassed ideas that paralleled Wright's organic theory, yet gave his ideas a larger context and cultural weight. Gordon embraced the idea that American design had always looked inward for influence, but imported valuable ideas from other cultures; Japanese culture and design was particularly resonant. With *shibui*, Gordon introduced a new term and a new understanding of "good design." For Gordon, it did not represent a rejection of modernism, or a repudiation of Wrightian forms; *shibui* represent a more sophisticated and inclusive approach to design. In 1960, it replaced organic as the *House Beautiful* "buzzword," yet still encompassed every position that the magazine had promoted since at least 1946. After the inward-looking and nationalistic period of 1950s, summed by Gordon's own support of the American Style, she again used *House Beautiful* as a "propaganda and teaching tool."[47] By 1960, she wanted to encourage Americans to "to broaden [their] 'thinking-and-wanting' apparatus, to make them think broader than locally, to make them want to travel internationally…."[48] Japan was the destination; the discovery of *shibui* was the goal.

Gordon was introduced to Japanese design early in her career; a latent interest in the "oriental" had attracted her to American architects like Wright, the Greene brothers, and the Pace Setter architects such as Parker, Harris, Ossipoff (whose work she

discovered on her way to Japan), and even Hill. In 1957, she began to research the complex Japanese principle of *shibui*.[49] As she discovered, *shibui* was a timeless concept of living the life of beauty – a much bigger idea than modernity. *Shibui* embraced universal principles, and, in this view, had greater longevity that anything of contemporary fashion, fad and whimsy.[50] And, according to Gordon, *shibui* did not depend on "individual taste or preference."[51]

Gordon's research, conducted exclusively in Japan, revealed that *shibui* referred to the ultimate in beauty. It required intrinsic quality, the "beauty of a thing – not on a thing." It implied simplicity, or the illusion of simplicity, that derived from a complexity of parts made into an integrated whole. Gordon described *shibui* as possessing a "plainness almost to the stage of austerity," but just as she always asserted her opposition to orthodox modernism, Gordon contended that *shibui* was "not Bauhaus austerity…plainness does not mean nothingness or emptiness…it is not the empty box (volume) concept of Mies."[52] Instead, *shibui* possessed depth of character, a solid inner reason for appearance. She ascribed this as a "presence – a fourth dimension." In all its subtlety, *shibui* "waited to be discovered;" it could not be obvious or revealed at once. This was simplicity achieved through the "unfinished statement, the uncompleted pattern, the fragmented motif, which hints at more than is shown."[53] Above all, things that were *shibui* patiently allowed for the "natural progression of things."[54]

In architectural terms, *shibui* encompassed what Gordon had long described as "livable."[55] It possessed characteristics of tranquility and repose. It did not compete, but

rather existed in the background. It was always appropriate, unobtrusive, but relayed depth of interest. All parts were interrelated, and nothing was superfluous. Gordon observed that objects without context are not truly *shibui*, alone, "they are on the way to becoming." *Shibui* was never contrived. It embraced "craftsmanship, intelligence of design, understanding of materials, imagination." In *shibui* design, the useful and the practical were not separated from the beautiful. *Shibui* drew great inspiration from nature, particularly from textures and colors. Yet it did not indicate the naturalistic, or rustic. As Gordon wrote, *shibui* was "of nature. Frank Lloyd Wright probably meant this with the term organic. …humanistic not naturalistic…"[56]

In the fall of 1960, Gordon and her staff condensed the essence of *shibui* into two large issues of *House Beautiful*. Her primary concern was that "in our affluent society, we own such an abundance of possessions that we are in danger of visual indigestion if we don't bring them together to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts." [57] The magazine, then with a circulation of over 750,000, sold out immediately. Tens of thousands of special issues were reprinted. The public response was positive and overwhelming.[58] Gordon realized that *shibui* had the potential to reach and influence a broad audience, much as the Pace Setter houses had. With this ambition, she launched the *shibui* exhibition, to be installed throughout the United States (Fig. 8.26; 8.27; 8.28). The show ran between 1961 and 1964, and was often opened by Gordon with a lecture entitled, "What is *shibui*."[59]

As Gordon traveled across the United States, from Philadelphia to Honolulu, to open the exhibits and to deliver public lectures on *shibui*, the Pace Setter House program was deemphasized.[60] Following the publication of Hill's Pace Setter for 1960, only two final selections were made: Roger Rasbach's Pace Setter for 1961 in San Antonio, and Alfred Browning Parker's Pace Setter for 1965 in Miami. Neither of these men were undiscovered talents and neither were new to *House Beautiful*: Rasbach published in the magazine since the early 1950s, and had in fact accompanied the *House Beautiful* staff, including Ezra Stoller and John deKoven Hill on their first trip to Japan to research *shibui*.[61] Parker had been a presence since 1946, and his three previous Pace Setters (1954, 1956 and 1959) were all well-received.

The two final Pace Setters, like *shibui*, looked both backward and forward. Each architect drew on his own previous experiments, and on his well-established design sensibilities. Both architects introduced their own theoretical positions to augment what *House Beautiful* had put in place for them. Both were conscious of *shibui* as an overriding concept; it had long replaced the "organic" epithet. Yet both Rasbach and Parker looked forward in one significant and very progressive way: to an increasing concern for architecture and the environment. Though *House Beautiful* had been promoting climate control since 1949, and the environmental or "green design" movement had yet to be established, both architects understood that as the 1960s progressed, architecture faced an entirely new set of challenges.

**The Pace Setter for 1961: Roger Rasbach and the Provident Home**

Wright's concern for integrated design encouraged many interpretations in the postwar period, and by the 1960s, was amplified by a growing concern for a new kind of environmental responsiveness. Texas architect Roger Rasbach (1928-2003) explored this fusion of Wright's legacy with a new idea: the provident home (Fig. 8.29). Rasbach's philosophy of provident design hinged upon independence, self-sufficiency, and integration; the provident home was a democratic domestic ideal transferred into the American 1960s.

Rasbach was born on May 13, 1928, in Pasadena California to Ruth Marie Luke Rasbach and the famed composer, Oscar Rasbach.[62] Ruth Luke, born in 1899, had grown up on a self-sufficient Washington farmstead.[63] Her rural western upbringing inspired many of Rasbach's ideas about independence and self-sufficiency. Oscar Rasbach, a composer and concert pianist trained in Vienna, grew up in Los Angeles.[64] In the 1930s, the Rasbachs lived in Pasadena, in an architect-designed "Florentine villa." Their house was stylistically historicist, but technologically modern: it featured in-room heat controls, retracting electric window screens, and the first all-electric kitchen in Pasadena. In spite of his privileged upbringing, Rasbach proudly recounted the "provident spirit" adopted by both his parents. In Pasadena, they grew a Victory garden, canned fruits and vegetables, and washed clothing by hand. Rasbach was taught to invest in quality things that lasted; his parents did not subscribe to the dominant consumer attitude of planned obsolescence. They owned the same car for decades, and never remodeled their 1930s

home. Raised in this conservationist's environment, Rasbach lamented the "throw away psychosis" of postwar America, where even architecture was not built to last.[65]

Rasbach received no formal training in architecture, but from the age of nineteen, he worked in the building industry.[66] Like many builders in postwar America, Rasbach's first homes were designed for young middle-income families. Taking inspiration from Cliff May, Rasbach's first projects were typical of the California ranch house: low, sprawling, built on a slab and turned inward to a patio. Though this type of house often responded to local climatic conditions with shading devices and wind protection, Rasbach showed an early interest in developing more sophisticated environmental controls. In the late 1940s, he began to experiment with passive solar features, such as reflective tile roofs.[67] He was, as he later recalled, reacting to the "inefficiency of glass box modernism."[68] By the time he was commissioned to build the Pace Setter for 1961, he was known for his efforts in architectural environmentalism and energy conservation. His Pace Setter addressed these concerns, a decade before the environmental movement commenced in United States.

Rasbach's intentions with the design of the Pace Setter for 1961 were a systenthsi of his activities in the late 1950s, and a theory underscored by publication of his two books, *The Provident Planner* (1976) and *The Provident Home* (1993). Rasbach's environmentally sensitive designs were published in *House Beautiful* as early as 1952, when his "Solar House" was featured as the first built-for-sale air conditioned house (Fig. 8.30).[69] Though the house was equipped with the Hupp Corporation's powerful

"Typhoon" cooling unit, Rasbach included passive climate control systems, such as wide eave overhangs, insulated reflective tiles, an internal shaded courtyard, wind screening, and cross-venting fenestration.[70]

Rasbach was quick to respond to America's consumption of energy and the excessive waste of what Reyner Banham termed a "throw away society." By 1961, the year of Rasbach's Pace Setter, conservation and environmentalism emerged as a cultural concern, particularly as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1961), a best-selling critique of harmful pesticides, was published. With Carson, the seeds of the environmental movement were sown. Though Rasbach had no specific response to Carson's warning of chemical hazards, he was concerned with the reduction of waste (time, labor, materials, and money). To conserve building resources, he looked to regional traditions of practical solutions to common problems, and to an architectural style born of purpose. Rasbach, like the editors at *House Beautiful*, believed that simplicity and common-sense design were the roots of a "true American style."[71]

The principles he espoused, under the term "provident," were most evident in the text of his two publications (Fig. 8.31). The provident spirit, which Rasbach linked to American pioneering character, was tied to a "family way of life." It was materially reflected in well-designed architecture and well-crafted furniture. The basic principles of provident design were: durability, economy, design, purpose, cultivation, conservation, permanence, naturalness, and unity.[72] Rasbach urged Americans to rediscover these principles and apply them to their lifestyles, their homes, and their communities. Simply

put, he encouraged a thoughtful analysis of contemporary problems. The optimal solutions avoided waste and encouraged a self-dependence that was, in his view, characteristically American. His principles were expressed in built form in the "Provident House," an architectural summation of his past work, including the Pace Setter for 1961. In formal terms, the provident house was defined by a simple plan and a simple roof oriented to capture sun and offer shade. The roof sloped appropriately to either trap heat or allow its escape, and roof cladding further aided this. Rasbach's provident interior retained the same elements of simplicity, integrated through his use of a design module.[73]

The principles of provident design retained remarkable similarity to ideas expressed in Cliff May's 1946 *Western Ranch Houses*, Gordon's American Style of 1950, and to Wright's organic theory. A synthesis of these ideas guided the production of the Pace Setter for 1961, constructed in San Antonio, Texas (Fig. 8.32). The Pace Setter was fully dedicated to Rasbach's evolving notion of self-reliance, which in San Antonio in the 1960s, depended on climate control. While many versions of modern design relied heavily on technological innovations such as air conditioning, Rasbach believed that a more efficient solution could be had: architects should work with nature rather than against it.[74] For Rasbach, self-reliance encompassed the idea of energy independence; consequently passive solar design emerged as a major theme in the Pace Setter for 1961.

Stylistically, the Pace Setter recalled a number of sources (Fig. 8.34). It continued the ranch house lineage, as it had developed among the Pace Setter architects from Cliff May to Harwell Hamilton Harris. In *House Beautiful'*s interpretation of the house, author

Curtis Besinger described Rasbach's Pace Setter as a house that retained "a continuity with past traditions, without imitating them."[75] He further argued that in this house, the "sense of place" was of the greatest significance.[76] Certainly, Rasbach demonstrated respect for the ferocity of the south Texas climate; in this regard, the Pace Setter was indeed "the product of a regionalism that has great depth in time, tradition, and climate."[77] The Pace Setter, argued Besinger, was not provincial, but regional. Besinger stretched his interpretation to link Rasbach's Pace Setter with the culture of southwest as rooted in traditions of Spain and Mexico.[78] However, Rasbach provided little that actually supported Besinger's view; the visual evidence was given only in the décor and fittings installed by the *House Beautiful* decorating staff (Fig. 8.35). The cultural influences were more difficult to discern than the continuation of Rasbach's two key themes: space and climatic control.

The most striking feature of the Pace Setter 1961 was the sliding roof canopy (Fig. 8.33). Propelled on rails, the canopy opened and closed, thus exposing the atrium living space to air movement; ceiling fans aided with air circulation in the more humid seasons. The far wall of the atrium space was enclosed only by a louvered shutter. Rasbach designed the Pace Setter for comfort in hot climates, installing passive climate control features such as overhanging eaves, louvered shutters, a ventilated and reflective roof; natural air flow, light color materials for cladding and landscape materials, and sufficient insulation.

As *House Beautiful* recognized, Rasbach's Pace Setter was not preoccupied with any notions of "personal expression," nor did he have any "obsession to be modern regardless of any and all considerations."[79] Neither did he express a "reverence for historic precedents that ignores the changing means of meeting human needs."[80] The cultural reference, if not the regional aesthetic of the southwest, did blend the past, present, and region. He used both old and new materials, and building techniques that employed both craft and the machine. The skeleton of the house was wholly contemporary, open, and flexible. Rasbach created space that was "not contained but continuous."[81] He achieved a continuity between interior spaces, but also between interior and exterior, apparent in his use of like materials and "continuity of form and structure."[82]

With the Pace Setter for 1961, House Beautiful established a new outlet for the evolving American Style. It combined the idea of livability and philosophy of organic design from the previous Pace Setters, with a concern for simplicity, regional expression, and self-reliance, to create what Rasbach understood as an environmentally responsive prototype of good domestic design.

**The Last Pace Setter: Alfred Browning Parker, 1965**

Following on the heels of Roger Rasbach, Alfred Browning Parker designed and built *House Beautiful*'s last Pace Setter House in 1965 (Fig. 8.36). Parker, like Rasbach, was driven by a strong desire to connect architecture directly to the environment, and

with the final Pace Setter and his works that followed, he became something of an architectural environmentalist (or, in his 1954 terms, ecologist).[83] The theoretical underpinnings of this last Pace Setter came directly from his 1965 book, *You and Architecture: A Practical Guide to the Best in Building*.[84] Though his own theory had been in place for two decades, with this book, he articulated his views for a broad audience, in the form of a practical guide to understanding architecture. His book was indeed a useful tool for interpreting his last Pace Setter. In a 1965 statement simply titled "Philosophy," Parker wrote: "it is my belief that man must constantly seek to live harmoniously in his environment. He must be a conservationist of both human and material sources. It sometimes appears that we are children playing with our planet rather than maturing heirs to an incredibly beautiful balanced system…"[85] He goes on to establish five principles, which represented the trajectory of *You and Architecture*. Parker's principles were (emphasis his):

> BUILD STRONGLY
>
> BUILD AS DIRECTLY AS POSSIBLE WITH NO COMPLICATIONS
>
> USE THE MATERIAL AT HAND AND KEEP THESE AS FEW AS YOU CAN
>
> LET YOUR BUILDING LOVE ITS SITE AND GLORIFY ITS CLIMATE
>
> DESIGN FOR USE – MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL[86]

As an extension of these principles, Parker continued to encourage the use of natural and indigenous materials that reacted well to their regional climate.[87] Parker re-asserted the importance of integrated design, with forms, colors, and textures selected to harmonize

with the natural forms found on the individual building site. Continuity and singleness of purpose in both structure and ornament continued to be a priority for Parker. The elements of humanism in Parker's work remained apparent, as he wrote that "man is the scale," and "buildings are almost always concerned with man, and when we lose the sense of scale, the sense of proportion to man, we lose the *raison d'etre* of the building."[88] Most importantly, and as Parker had stressed in his previous writings, the building should be related to its site and well-adapted to its climate. Parker's theory, as concisely laid out in *You and Architecture*, guided the design of the Pace Setter for 1965. Climatic requirements, including his desire to take advantage of the site's prevailing breezes and dramatic views, were Parker's priorities (Fig. 8.37).

Parker, after a divorce in 1956, remarriage in 1959, and the birth of another child in 1960, was undergoing a personal and professional transition. He experienced a great deal of success in the 1950s and 60s, and his desire to build a new home – the Pace Setter for 1965 – reflected his good fortune. This house, Parker's fifth residence for himself, was given the largest budget of all his previous homes. The change in his lifestyle was apparent, if only in the furnishings and décor. Though Parker and his family, which now included eight members, did a majority of the construction as they had done for the 1946 and 1954 houses, this Pace Setter was a lavish piece of craftsmanship. Parker had certainly become the architect of stature as Elizabeth Gordon had predicted in 1951.

Parker's Pace Setter for 1965, built in Gables Estates near Miami, embraced an entry court with the main axis of the house stretched along the waterfront (Fig. 8.38). The

house, with its U-shaped plan, was dominated by a heavy hipped roof and deep eaves. The public and private elevation of the home demonstrated differing degrees of solidity, reflecting Parker's desire to retain a closed, public façade. (Fig. 8.39). This impenetrable tiled wall was monolithic, with only narrow vertical windows spaced evenly along the façade. It was pierced only by a series of thin linear windows placed at the eaves (recalling the fenestration of Wright's Prairie Period).[89] In contrast to this closed wall, the other three elevations of the house remained open to the bay views and prevailing breezes (Fig. 8.40). Much like the bay-side of the 1954 Pace Setter, these walls were fitted with a series of louvered doors, or *persianas*. The wall, for Parker, had completely vanished. Yet the operable doors retained the functionality of closure to accommodate foul weather. To access the stunning views to Biscayne Bay, Parker was attentive to the potential positions of the observer. He provided visual cues that encouraged the eye to move around the interior spaces, shifting from a standing height to seated height, and in the area of the bedrooms, to a reclining height (Fig. 8.43). To accommodate these changing positions, Parker inserted balconies and planting bins at a minimum vertical height, and left guard railings open. The design of the master bedroom most clearly reflected the importance of views: the bed was raised on a platform to allow the sleepers to see across the balcony into the bay.

The massive structure of this house signified Parker's emphasis on regional climate; he gave constant attention to the requirements of a water-front house built in a tropical hurricane zone. The two upper stories of the house were supported on reinforced

concrete pilings seated into a solid foundation of bedrock. He employed an innovative interlocking system (steel and concrete) to connect the floors, roof and chimney. Parker found this structural design to be very successful, and the home survived the ravages of even the most severe of hurricanes.[90] The principal rooms were raised off the ground, leaving a wide seaway underneath and through the center of the house. Rising water was thus allowed to pass through the seaway, across the arrival court and through openings in the rear of the drive, without damaging the home. The angular forms of the planting bins, prow-like terraces, and supporting columns further diverted winds and water.[91]

For Parker, space was the underlying motivator. He designed around the concept that "the first consideration of architecture is space, and that space extends vertically as well as horizontally."[92] The 1965 Pace Setter demonstrated both the horizontal progression along a lengthy axis (extending down the pool, thorough the house and into the sea) and the vertical progression established by a dramatic staircase and penetrating chimney core (Fig. 8.41).[93]

While a unifying design theme or motif was readily apparent in Parker's 1954 Pace Setter, the 1965 Pace Setter lacked this decorative emphasis, or singleness of purpose (Fig. 8.42). Although many of the fittings were built into the structure, such as mahogany tables and teakwood shelves, Parker filled the house with an eclectic collection of furnishings and objects that failed to produce a unified scheme. Simplicity in materials was observed in the frame of the house, but was lost in the interior design. For example, the master weaver Boris Kroll produced thirty-one fabrics for the house,

taking design cues from the architectural elements and the seaside environment. The fabrics reflected the structure of teakwood grilles and the textures and hues of the stone, and the color palette drew from the surrounding greenery, sand and sea. Despite his obvious sensitivity and organic approach, the variety displaced the sense of simplicity achieved in the Parker's earlier Pace Setters.

Because his concept of organic architecture slowly evolved to emphasize performance and climatic responsiveness, which included appropriate siting and the use of native materials, Parker began to develop a unique architectural identity that relied on both the precedence of Wrightian forms, and more specifically, on tropical vernacular design. With this development, the 1965 Pace Setter marked a maturation of Parker's individual style. His growth as a designer spawned an architecture that found deep roots in the American tradition, and grew to reflect the individuality of the designer and the environmental context in which the house was carefully placed.

The 1965 Pace Setter marked a transition, indeed an endpoint, for both Parker and for *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter Program. With Elizabeth Gordon's retirement in 1964, *House Beautiful* reinvented its image. Under the new editor-in-chief, Sarah Lee Tomerlin, the magazine withdrew from public debate and from the search for a unique American modernism.

## Chapter IX: "What is American about American Architecture?"

Elizabeth Gordon announced her retirement from *House Beautiful* in January 1965 (Fig. 9.1). Amidst growing animosity within the Hearst machine, she refused to surrender her editorials to "the service of advertisers," and possibly risk the trust of her readers.[1] Instead, she resigned. According to her closest confidants, she was forced out.[2] Despite her hasty withdrawal from the architectural community, her contributions to the development of American postwar modernism did not go unnoticed. Upon her departure, Pace Setter architect Alfred Browning Parker and *House Beautiful*'s housing-economist consultant Miles Colean nominated her for an Honorary Membership in the A.I.A.[3] Her application was rejected three times. On the occasion of her eightieth birthday in 1986, Parker and Curtis Besinger once more submitted her name for consideration.[4] This bid, coming nearly two decades after her retirement, was successful. Her honorary membership was not without controversy: scores of letters were exchanged among the A.I.A. committee members, debating her worth and the significance of her many endeavors. Charles H. Kahn, a Professor of Architecture at the University of Kansas, best summed up Gordon's controversial career in a letter to his fellow A.I.A. committee members; he wrote:

> I believe it is time to put behind us the pique we felt in the '50's at some of Ms. Gordon's more controversial statements and recognize her for some of the very

> real contributions she made to the profession…. The issue which has seemed to stand in the way of Ms. Gordon's full acceptance by the architectural fraternity is her April 1953 article in *House Beautiful* attacking the International Style ["The Threat to the Next America"]. It is now 35 years since that famous, and admittedly for the time, somewhat intemperate attack on the anointed standard bearer of modern architecture. What is for me most interesting is to reread that article in the light of the present polemic in our profession which identifies the same failings in so-called modern architecture that she articulated….[5]

Kahn recognized that "the strength of her remarks in 1953 were in response to her perception of an established position in the contemporary press which brooked scant tolerance for those who did not toe the commonly-accepted line." He recognized that it was not the substance of Gordon's criticism that caused such controversy, but rather the "strong language in her 1953 article was the result of her deep feeling for aesthetic quality in design and a passionate commitment to the true meaning of functionalism and its compatibility with aesthetic quality." In an effort to convince the committee Gordon's achievements, he argued that, as a profession, "we might not have totally agreed with her and might have sneered condescendingly at *House Beautiful* as a legitimate organ of architectural comment and criticism, but we cannot ignore the fact that much of what was contained in that article for which she was excoriated by the then avant-garde elites in the profession has come to be the accepted base on which our currently widely-published

main stream is founded. …. Surely it is time to accept Ms. Gordon into the fold, to rescue her from that beyond-the-pale exile to which she has been condemned."[6] (Fig. 9.2).

Gordon may have been forced into a sort of exile by the architectural profession, but her role in the postwar architectural discourse was significant. Though her line of argument was highly problematic and at times logically inconsistent (or purposefully selective), her effort to re-open and close a long-standing controversy between organic modernism and functionalist modernism – or in her terms, the American Style and the International Style – was considerable. She was certainly not the only critic to assert such views, but her voice was loud and her audience large. As Curtis Besinger later observed, she publicly questioned the path of modernism "13 years before Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction*…21 years before Peter Blake [in "Follies of Modern Architecture"]…and 24 years before Charles Jenks in his *Language of Post-modern Architecture.*"[7] As Besinger suggested, Gordon had long been an advocate of architectural reform, and of good, livable modern design. Her effort to re-frame modern domestic architecture went beyond her fabled essay of 1953. With the Pace Setter House program, launched with Cliff May's ranch houses, Gordon created a forum in which competing versions of modern design could grow and flourish. To critics like Gordon, it was clear that several models of modern architecture did and could exist simultaneously; she sought a viable public path for one of these lines.

Over a twenty-year period, *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House Program chronicled the architectural evolution of a seemingly unorthodox line of modernism, a

line that simultaneously allowed a multiplicity of influences. Gordon found a number of terms to describe the Pace Setter Houses over the two postwar decades; each term described the dominant technological, architectural or cultural concern of that moment in time. Each term was linked to the idea of modern living, and each term rested on the same foundation: postwar modernism, livable modernism, organic modernism, new organic modernism, regional modernism, and even *shibui* expressed the same shared concern for living well.

Guided by the democratic ideal of equal access and equal participation, particularly that of the architectural customer, the Gordon – with the Pace Setters as case studies – explored crucial themes current in the postwar years: technology in service of man; architecture as a social art; modernism as an attitude and a way of living; an architecture of humanism; an architecture of individualism (choice and expression); an architecture of democracy; regionalism (which can also concerned both humanism and democratic architecture); and the continued validity of the nation's architectural heritage. Each of the Pace Setter architects responded in some way to these cultural forces, and each produced architecture that offered not only solutions to practical problems, but suggestions of the continual development of modern design.

As varied as the Pace Setter houses were, a set of unified if not universal principles guided their actual production (Fig. 9.3). The creation of a unified aesthetic was impossible (and undesirable), yet a kinship was maintained by a constant craving for space, the desire for integrated design, and a retention of the visual cues of domesticity,

specifically the pitched roof and hearth. For all of the Pace Setter architects, space was the great protagonist. The creation of expansive and dynamic space, the possession of space, or at least the illusion of possessing space, motivated most of these postwar designs. The preoccupation with space, to use designer George Nelson's observation, expanded domestic architecture beyond its two-dimensional presence in professional magazines or the shelter press; it promoted a third dimension of depth and a fourth dimension of time. The experience of domestic architecture as a casual unfolding of modernity united each of the Pace Setter houses. The emphasis on experiential qualities introduced an element of humanism, and encouraged the inclusion of a quality of warmth lent by natural materials, natural colors, and wrapped in the psychology of the idea of "home."

Through the lens of *House Beautiful*, as focused by Elizabeth Gordon, the forces that shaped postwar domestic architecture became remarkably clear. The Pace Setter houses formed a complex matrix in which both internal and external factors played a part. Internally, individual designers struggled to find and express their own creative energy in a way that could meet the desires of individuals who would consume their architecture. Internal conflicts about the form and meaning of modernism existed within the architectural practice, within the wider culture of architecture, within various regions, and within the United States as a nation. Externally, postwar architecture was significantly impacted by the economic marketplace, political struggles, and a global war for cultural

domination. All of these forces collided in the postwar American house, and by extension, in *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setters.

The larger implications borrow a question from James Marston Fitch: what is American about American architecture? *House Beautiful*'s broad questioning of modern design, unhampered by architectural pretensions, provided a glimpse of the social concerns, cultural values, and physical characteristics that fused to create one version of a national architecture in the postwar years. Though rather stereotypical, values of self-determination, freedom, independence, democracy, plurality, and boundless opportunity guided the search for a new American domestic architecture.

## Endnotes

### Chapter I: Introduction

[1] For the perceived "solution" to the problem of the modern postwar house, see designer George Nelson's response in "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 February 1948. *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* XV no. 3 (Spring 1948).

[2] For Alfred Barr's terms "Cottage Style" and "International Cottage Style," and his criticism of organic architecture and the Bay Region Style and as overly-romantic, see ""What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 February 1948. *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* XV no. 3 (Spring 1948).

[3] Gelernter, for example, includes the now-iconic examples of high modernism, such as Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House and Philip Johnson's Glass House, but also devotes a good deal of space to a discussion of suburbanization and the middle-class resistance to "high fashion Modernism." The middle-class resistance, according to Gelernter, engendered responses not only in the form of the large-scale developments such as Levittown, but the "relaxed" modernism of the Western ranch house. See Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context* (University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1999): 255-272. Dennis Doordan likewise underscores the postwar rejection of the "Miesian" aesthetic in favor of an alternative form of modernism based on Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of organic architecture. Doordan is one of the few historians to extend, albeit in passing, Wright's influence into the realm of mainstream housing of the postwar period. See Dennis

Doordan, *Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Prentice Hall and Harry N. Abrams, Inc.: Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2002).

[4] McCoy's landmark study introduced the Case Study Houses as a both a stage in the evolution of the modern home for servantless families and as part of the "plan to protect modern architecture from the flourishing eclectics." See Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses* (Hennessey & Ingalls: Santa Monica, 1977): 1.

[5] For further exploration of alternative forms of modern architecture, see Jerry Ditto and Lanning Stern, *Eichler Homes* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995) and Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunch, *Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2002).

[6] For an exploration of modernist ideas for mass housing, with the builder as catalyst, see Christopher T. Martin, "Tract-House Modern: A Study of Housing completed and Consumption in the Washington Suburbs, 1946-1960." (Dissertation, George Washington University, 2002). Matthew Postal's dissertation also provides a thoughtful examination of the discourse surrounding the idea of domestic modernism. See Matthew A. Postal, "Toward a democratic esthetic? The Modern House in America, 1932-1955" (Dissertation, City University of New York, 1998).

[7] For a comprehensive catalog of Wright's Usonian houses, see William Allin Storer, *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* (Chicago and New York: University of Chicago Press, 1993). For the Usonian idea in the context of Wright's Broadacre City, see Anthony Alofsin, "Broadacre City: The Reception of a Modernist Vision, 1932-1988," *Center* 5 (1989):5-43. For separate treatment of the Usonian houses, John Sergeant's *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian House: The Case for*

*Organic Architecture* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976) remains a key reference. For a "client" account, see Alvin Rosenbaum's *Usonia: Frank Lloyd Wright's Design for America* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1999). Rosenbaum, who grew up in a Usonian home, provides a broad context for the Usonian, with the inclusion of sections about the Taliesin Fellowship, the Tennessee Valley Authority, housing under Franklin Roosevelt, and Wright's postwar efforts to promote Broadacre City.

[8] For Alan Hess's views on the relation of Wright's organic architecture and specifically the Usonian to the ranch houses of the 1940s and 1950s, see Alan Hess, *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004); and *Organic Architecture: The Other Modernism* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2006).

[9] Postal's treatment highlights Gordon's opposition to the International Style and the Museum of Modern Art, and a brief treatment of her efforts to promote a practical, tasteful and uniquely American architectural style. While Postal provides insightful commentary on Gordon's editorials, his study parameters preclude a complete understanding of Gordon's agenda. She did not oppose modern architecture, as Postal suggests; she contested only one variant of modern design – the International Style – and argued for a more nuanced and humanistic alternative. Postal only briefly (in one paragraph) discusses the role of Pace Setter House Program, and only considers the program up to 1954, ignoring the last and most significant decade of its run. Gordon's relationship with Wright and her support of organic architecture is also briefly examined, though primarily with respect to *House Beautiful*'s role as promoter of Wright's work.

[10] Dianne Harris, "Making Your Private World: Modern Landscape Architecture and House Beautiful, 1945-1965"in *The Architecture of Landscape, 1940-1960*, ed. Marc Treib (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[11] Richard Guy Wilson, "High Noon on the Mall: Modernism versus Traditionalism, 1910-1970," CASVA 1987.

[12] Lisa Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (Center for American History: Austin, 1985); and *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1991).

[13] Elizabeth Gordon to Indira Berndtson, 17 September 1996. Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Hill Papers; MS 241.A.3.133

[14] Elizabeth Gordon's Birthday Scrapbook, Compiled by Carl Norcross. Author's collection.

[15] The term "livable" began to appear in government research reports as early as 1936, and in the language of architectural writing (for both a popular and professional audience) around the same period. Kristina Wilson, in *Livable Modernism: Interior Decorating and Design During the Great Depression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), offers the term "livable modernism" to describe modern design of the 1930s that was concerned with simplicity, affordability and comfort. The same meaning was carried forth into the 1940s and 1950s, and I have chosen to apply the term "livable" in much the same way as Wilson.

[16] Robert C. Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979): 325.

[17] See Bruno Zevi's preface in Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*: xiii-xiv.

[18] This speech came to my attention through Alan Hess, *Organic Architecture: The Other Modernism* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2006). For the complete text, see Esther McCoy, "Sim Bruce Richards," *Nature in Architecture* (San Diego Natural History Museum, April-June 1984).

[19] Esther McCoy, "Sim Bruce Richards," *Nature in Architecture* (San Diego Natural History Museum, April-June 1984).

[20] For a suggestion of a link between Wright and the California ranch house in general, see Dennis Doordan, *Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002); Alan Hess, *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004); and Gwendolyn Wright (*Building the Dream.* Cambridge. MA: MIT Press, 1981):251.

[21] Alfred Browning Parker, *You and Architecture: A Practical Guide to the Best in Building* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1965).

[22]Andrew Shanken, "From Total War to Total Living: American Architecture and the Culture of Planning, 1933-194X (PhD Dissertation, Princeton, 1999).

**Chapter II: The First Postwar House**

[1] Gordon recalled, in 1996, that much of her youth was spent in conflict with her grandmother Anna E. Ball (born ca. 1842), "who ran our household…according to the Methodist Discipline published in 1895…quite obsolete in its values." According to census records, Ball lived with the Gordon family for most of Elizabeth's early life. Gordon to Indira Berndtson 17 September 1996, John deKoven Hill Papers. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Scottsdale, Arizona. There has been some uncertainty and inaccurate reporting of Gordon's birth year. Several sources, including *Who's Who in America* (1963) give Gordon's birth date as 8 August 1907; her Indiana

Birth Records and profile for an honorary nomination to the American Institute of Architects gives the correct birth year of 1906. See Indiana Birth Records; Profile for AIA nomination; MS 241.A.3.137-39, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas). Gordon's resume submitted to the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery further verifies 1906, as does "Dear Elizabeth…" A Collection of Letters and Scrapbook for Elizabeth Gordon's 65th Birthday, August 8, 1971 (Author's Collection).

[2] Logansport, the county seat of Cass County, had a population of under 15,000 in 1910. Gordon's father Byron worked for the railroad; her mother Angeline M. Ball (Gordon) presumably ran the household; she listed no occupation in the U.S. Census documents. See Indiana Census, 1910.

[3] Gordon writes that her grandmother Anna's strict Methodist beliefs shaped her early life, and were directly responsible for the hasty end to her freshman year in college. Gordon to Indira Berndtson 17 September 1996, John deKoven Hill Papers. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Scottsdale, Arizona.

[4] Gordon recalls that after her removal from Northwestern, she "turned home into hell" until her family agreed to send her back to college. Her mother, Angeline, accompanied her, and soon started taking her own courses. Gordon writes that her mother's "schoolwork became more interesting to her than my soul's salvation. And grandmother's influence was also very diminished." Ibid.

[5] Gordon notes that her parents were unaware of the University of Chicago's reputation as a "freethinking" institution, and simply chose it for her because it "had no sororities." Ibid.

[6] Gordon taught English in Wisconsin in 1927-28. See "Resume of Elizabeth Gordon." Elizabeth Gordon Papers 1958-1987, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[7] In an unpublished autobiographical essay, Gordon recalls reading "a book by Edna Ferber about a girl who worked on a New York Newspaper, who had an exciting and wonderful life. Decided I wanted to go that route, for it would be a learning route." Gordon could have been referring to Ferber's novel *Dawn O'Hara*, the story of a newspaperwoman in Milwaukee (1911). Ferber's own short career in journalism and her strong female protagonists were likely of great inspiration to Gordon. For reference to Ferber, see Elizabeth Gordon, "Why have I lived to age 90 and been so healthy," March 1996, Hill Papers.

[8] Gordon and Carl Hafey Norcross were married on 24 December 1928 (see "Elizabeth Gordon," in *Who's Who in America*, 1963). Norcross (1902-1988) was born in Big Rapids, Michigan, to Sherman B. and Gertrude Hafey Norcross. He attended high school in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and later attended the University of Chicago. He pursued graduate work at the London School of Economics, earned a Master of the Arts and a doctorate from Columbia University. He worked as a journalist, and soon became the managing editor of McGraw Hill's aviation magazine. In 1942, Norcross enlisted in the United States Air Force, and was sent to England. One year later, he was promoted to Director of Intelligence for Third Air Division. As the war came to a close, Norcross began to work as a member of United States Strategic Bombing Analysis Group. He continued this affiliation, but returned to his career in journalism and magazine published. He went to work for Time, Inc., and served as an associate editor at *Fortune,* and from 1952 to 1963 – the peak of his wife's career at Hearst's House Beautiful – Norcross was the executive editor of *House and*

*Home* (see Conroy, Sarah Booth. "The Old Battlers for Design, Retired to Their Country Keep." The Washington Post, Sunday Jan 6, 1974). Norcross also had an interest in planning new communities, and ran a consulting firm for many years that offered advisory services. By 1969, Norcross had retired, and moved to Adamstown, Maryland with Gordon. For more on Norcross, see Carl Norcross Obituary, 1988. Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas).

[9] Gordon recounts that *Good Housekeeping* provided a major break for her. Forced by what she considered an ill-trained staff to "self-generate" editorial ideas and story design, she learned how to research and write quickly, and how to present finished copy and illustrative spreads. She claimed that she was frustrated with *Good Housekeeping*'s staff (between 1936 and 1941), and convinced the Hearst management to fire the current "architectural consultant." They did, and hired Dorothy Draper, who Gordon felt "never got the drift about what *Good Housekeeping* should be showing their readers." Draper offered decorating advice for the magazine in "Ask Dorothy Draper." For more on Gordon at *Good Housekeeping,* see Elizabeth Gordon, "Why have I lived to age 90 and been so healthy," March 1996, Hill Papers.

[10] For her effort to inform the public on how to build a quality house for the least amount of money, see Elizabeth Gordon and Dorothy Ducas, *More House for Your Money* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1937). The aim of this book was to provide a "how-to manual" for building one's own house for the least amount of money, without sacrificing quality. Dorothy Ducas (Herzog) was a fellow journalist and editor; she worked for *The New York Evening Post, The New York Herald Tribune*, and *McCall's*. During Gordon's first years at *House Beautiful,* Ducas was a frequent contributor to the magazine. Ducas also headed the Magazine Bureau of the

Office of War Information from its inception in June 1942 to its closure in April 1945. Gordon and Ducas likely met either while both were on staff at the *Herald Tribune* in the late 1920s, or through Gordon's husband Carl Hafey Norcross who attended Columbia University (for both a Master's and Doctoral degree) at approximately the same time as Ducas. For a brief mention of Ducas and the Magazine Bureau, see Mary Ellen Zimmerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1998: 193).

[11] Gordon and Ducas offered fifteen descriptive and instructive chapter headings: What to do before you begin; How to buy land; How to get plans; How much to spend and how to spend it; How to finance; methods of construction; What materials to use; Foundations and cellars; The roof over your head; Weatherproofing; Finishing the inside; Finishing the rough edges; Light and power; Putting in the plumbing; and Manufacturing Climate. See Gordon and Ducas, *More House for Your Money* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1937).

[12] Gordon and Ducas, xii-xiii.

[13] Gordon and Ducas, ix.

[14] Gordon wrote that she was mostly self-educated, and her expertise developed from a need to "know the facts." She spent eight years traveling and writing for *Good Housekeeping*, and was intimately familiar with all aspects and many professionals within the building trades.

[15] Gordon's hire date has been reported in a variety of sources (including her own recollections) as either 1939, 1940 or 1941. The correct date is October 1941, as indicated in both *Who's Who in America* (1963) and an announcement by Richard A. Hoefer, *House Beautiful*'s publisher, in the 17 October 1941 edition of *New York Times:* 18.

[16] For an excellent account of the history of women's magazines, see Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Greenwood Press: Westport CT, 1998). Though Zuckerman does not discuss *House Beautiful* at length, she provides data, general context, and a framework (including an abbreviated but insightful account of the role of women's magazines in the postwar period) that are helpful for further investigations into instruments of mass media. For Harwell Harris's comments on the role of *House Beautiful* within this context, see Harry Harmon's speech, American Institute of Architects Awards Presentation, AIA National Convention, Orlando, 19-22 June 1987, AIA Archives.

[17] For the first of these comments, see Vladimir Ossipoff, FAIA, in Letters for AIA nomination, MS 241.A.3.137-39, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon, Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas. The second comes from John deKoven Hill, who joined the staff in 1953 and became a lifetime friend of Gordon. See John deKoven Hill and Maggie Valentine, *John deKoven Hill* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997): 436.

[18] By all accounts, Gordon was both bold and attractive, attributes that must have aided her success in a brutally competitive (and male-dominated) profession. Frank Lloyd Wright was recorded as saying that she was one of the "prettiest girls who ever came down the pike." See Elizabeth Gordon Collection of Letters for 65th Birthday, August 8, 1971(Author's Collection). Gordon was famous for her stylish and careful dress, as well as her ever-present Robert Dudley hats. Her trademark, signifying her penchant for control, was her perfectly kept dark hair, coiffed in a roll atop her head. For Elizabeth Gordon's hats, see Sarah Booth Conroy, "To Hat and to Hold: Millinery Revisited." *Washington Post* (n.d., ca 1986). She must have been quite bold and

intimidating, as John deKoven Hill observed upon his arrival to the House Beautiful staff; Hill remarked that most people seemed a bit afraid of her (he never was). For Hill's initial reactions to Gordon, see Hill to Parents, November 1953, Hill Papers.

[19]Over 1.9 million war and defense homes were constructed between the signing of the Lanham Act in October 1940 and the pivot point of the war in 1943; another half-million homes were completed before Japan's surrender in 1945. World War II boosted the United States housing economy in a significant way. In 1930, before the Depression was felt nationwide, housing starts were at 330,000 annually; by 1933 construction had dropped nearly 90% with only 93,000 housing starts. That number increased exponentially in the 1940s: in 1940, 603,000 dwelling units were started; in 1941, the number rose to 706,000. By 1945, the yearly total had declined to 326,000. For detailed statistics on yearly housing starts, see *Housing Construction Statistics: 1889-1964* (U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1966). Joseph Mason offers a good summary in *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980 (*Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1982): 36.

[20] Richard Neutra produced two defense communities of note: Avion Village for aircraft workers in Grand Prairie Texas, and Channel Heights in Los Angeles, completed in 1942. As part of the Manhattan project, SOM designed defense housing for the "top secret" community in Oak Ridge Tennessee. In addition to his collaboration with Marcel Breuer on ALCOA's Aluminum City Terrace (near Pittsburgh, 1942), Gropius worked with Konrad Wachsman to create a prototype for a Packaged House in 1943. Louis Kahn, working with George Howe, built defense housing at Pine Ford Acres in Middletown, Pennsylvania. Fuller's experiments with Dymaxion Deployment Unit were on display at MOMA as early as 1941. Frank Lloyd Wright's foray into the defense

housing industry, Cloverleaf, though never implemented due to the closing of the Division of Defense Housing program, was a notable critique of "government housing as cracker boxes." For an excellent survey of architects involved with defense housing, see Peter S. Reed, "Enlisting Modernism" in ed. Donald Albrecht, *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

[21] With President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a third-term Commander-in-Chief, and with General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, the United States appeared poised for a quick victory. The "Good War" seemed near its close as the strategic base at Guadalcanal was captured, as the Germans surrendered to the Soviets in Stalingrad, and as Mussolini was ousted by his own Fascist Grand Council in Italy. On the home front, Americans anticipated relief from war-related work and rationing, and were specifically prepared for a rapid transition from defense building to "Victory building." Though "victory" as used in the context of gardening and housing was meant as a term of empowerment, contemporary journalists suggested it had the context of a stop-gap measure that represented something other than progress and "quality" in terms of architecture. See for example, *Architectural Forum* "Planning the Postwar House." Jan 1944. For more on the shift in professional focus away from the production of singular architectural objects toward broad urban planning, see Andrew Shanken, "From Total War to Total Living: American Architecture and the Culture of Planning, 1933-194X," (PhD Dissertation, Princeton, 1999).

[22] *Saturday Evening Post,* 6 March 1943.

[23] Elizabeth Gordon, "People want sensible things ..." *House Beautiful* 87 (Apr 1945). The "$64 Question" was a catch-phrase in the 1940s, derived from the popular CBS radio quiz show *Take it*

*or Leave it*, which ran from 1940 to 1947 and was reborn in 1950 on NBC radio as *"The $64 Question."* The term $64 question usually applied to a difficult question or problem.

[24]Elizabeth Gordon, "People want sensible things ..." *House Beautiful* 87 (Apr 1945): 119.

[25]Ibid., p. 120.

[26]Ibid., p. 119.

[27] Jedd S Reisner, "Modern but not too modern." *House Beautiful* 90 (Apr 1948): 120 -125.

[28] "House Omnibus, Better Homes & Gardens." *Architectural Forum* 81 (Apr 1945).

[29]Ibid.

[30]Joseph Hudnut, "The Post-Modern House." *Architectural Record* 97 (May 1945): 70-75.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Among his many contributions, Howard Myers, editor-publisher of *Architectural Forum*, was instrumental in returning Frank Lloyd Wright to the architectural discourse in 1938. Myers sent George Nelson and Paul Grotz to Taliesin to write the 1938 cover story on him, as recounted by Edgar Tafel in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Recollections by Those Who Knew Him* (New York: Wiley, 1993). Notably, *Architectural Forum* was owned by Time, Inc, who also gave Wright the cover in January 1938. Myers, a great supporter of Wright, died in 1947.

[35]"House Omnibus." *Architectural Forum* 81 (Apr 1945): 90.

[36] Ibid., p. 89.

[37]"Planning the Post War House III." *Architectural Forum* 80 (March 1944): 80.

[38] "House Omnibus, Better Homes & Gardens." *Architectural Forum* 81 (Apr 1945).

[39]Between 1939 and 1952, scores of housing research surveys were conducted under the auspices of government agencies, foundations, and consumer magazines. The Building Research Advisory Board, the National Housing Agency, the FHA, the Survey Research Center, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, the Small Homes Council at the University of Illinois, the National Research Council, the National Academy of Sciences, and the John B. Pierce Foundation were among the most noted contributors. Likewise, the popular press launched a significant to design and publish "desires" surveys. For example, *Better Homes & Gardens* surveyed 4900 families in 1946, to produce "Behind the Blueprints." *Collier's* survey of 1837 readers in 1946 resulted in *Collier's Families Report Their Housing Plans for Tomorrow,* and was followed by a second survey in 1949. *Woman's Home Companion* also surveyed 1935 families in 1946; *McCall's* surveyed 18,580 families in 1945 to produce *American Woman's Home of Tomorrow* and several other surveys of what women want. During this same period, *House Beautiful* launched numerous reader-response quizzes and surveys. Professional magazines such as *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Forum*, and *Merchant House Builder* likewise surveyed numerous families between 1936 and 1950. Builders were not to be left out of the research frenzy: Fritz Burns and Levitt & Sons both reported their own in-house research and development departments, the purpose of which was to collect data that could inform design and development choices. For a survey of housing research undertaken in these years, see *A Survey of Housing Research in the United States* (Housing and Home Finance Agency. Washington, D.C., 1952).

[40] Specific data indicate that 17% of buyers had a family income of under $300: 26% between $3000-4000, and 22% had income between $4000 -5000. 19% had income between $5000-

$7000, while 13% had a yearly income of over $7500. Edward T. Paxton, *What People Want When They Buy a House* (U.S. Department of Commerce, United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1955): 1.

[41] *Architectural Forum*, reprinting an article from *Yank: The Army Weekly*, estimated the cost of an average postwar house at $6,000 (for "the same bungalow you could have picked up for $4,500 before the war"). Sgt. George N. Meyers, "Your Post-War Home," *Architectural Forum* 81 (Feb 1945); reprinted from *Yank: The Army Weekly.* With such high costs, majority of purchases were financed by borrowing: 86% of home buyers by 1949-50 borrowed at least a portion of the purchase price. National survey data for finance structure were thought to be "inconclusive," but the data indicate that 56% of first mortgages were conventional and without government assurance. For more mortgage data, see Paxton 92, 98.

[42]For more, see Paxton. The John B. Pierce Foundation's "Family Behavior, Attitudes and Possessions" was equally influential, and in fact, inspired Joseph Hudnut's comments in "The Post-Modern House."

[43] The Pierce Foundation survey, conducted by female interviewers, was specifically limited to "housewives" in the New York area. *Architectural Forum's* synopsis in 1944 states that similar research surveys underway could be expected to show similar results, and with "only negligible regional differences."

[44] Surveys indicated that 42% of potential buyers wanted a new house. In terms of form, 74% wanted a one-story dwelling, primarily because of the perception that it would be more convenience and generate less work. The average square footage for single-family detached house in 1950 was 983 (down 12% from average in 1940), though the survey omitted Los

Angeles. Brick, wood, stucco and stone were the preferred building materials, and 55% of houses purchased were indeed constructed of and clad with wood. 32% preferred brick; 14% preferred wood; stucco and stone trailed with 3% each, though 37% of respondents answered that they had no preference. According to survey, the preference for brick was primarily because of easy maintenance and ease of heating. For statistics and tables, see Paxton, *What People Want,* 13, 19, 22, 23.

[45] By 1950, majority of home-buying public (61% in 1949) wanted three bedrooms, although Housing and Home Finance Agency's Materials Use Survey shows that in 1950, two-thirds of new houses had only two bedrooms. Respondents desired more kitchen space in general, more storage space, more wall cabinets, more counter space, counters adjacent to the range, and more windows to allow for natural light. In 1949-50, consumers wanted at least two bathrooms (and only 17% got them in mass housing, 26% in custom built; most new houses were built with only one bathroom). See Paxton, *What People Want,* 40, 46.

[46] 70% to 100% of buyers surveyed wanted a porch, though only 43% got them. When asked to assess the importance of basements and attics, 67% of survey respondents wanted a basement (only one in five specifically did not want one). See Paxton, *What People Want,* 85.

[47] An overwhelming 85% of home buyers in 1949-50 surveys owned cars; 97% wanted a garage, but only 67% of the houses they were able to buy between these years had garages. See Paxton, *What People Want,* 66, 115.

[48] The University of Michigan survey of 1949-50 showed that buyers in fact attached very little importance to architectural style. See Paxton, *What People Want,* 16.

[49] The *Better Homes & Gardens* survey of 1948-49 indicates the following: traditional styles (including Cape Cod and Colonial) were preferred by 64% of home buyers in New England but only by 23% in the West Central and 11% in Mountain/Pacific areas.

[50] "Modern," as broadly conceived, was preferred by only 19% in the East. In sharp contrast, 59% of the readers in the west central region and 65% in the Pacific West wanted modern. The spread of a taste for modern from west to east was supported by surveys conducted by University of Illinois Small Homes Council: in 1945, 1/3 of those surveyed favored modern; in 1946, 42% favored modern (although 40% of respondents did not answer the question). A 1944 *McCall's* survey "Architectural Home of Tomorrow" showed that 44% of all respondents preferred modern (while the remaining 56% preferred traditional). This survey was compiled according to reader occupation, and interestingly indicates that unskilled labor, clerical workers and salespeople were more conservative than semi-skilled, professionals and executives. Although the preferences are all very close, it is interesting to note that respondents who self-identified as part of the "public service" sector – Presumably members of the Armed Forces, were the most receptive to modern design. See Paxton, *What People Want,* 17.

[51] Certainly, some surveys published accompanying images to define modern architecture to which the reader could respond. If this is the case, then the press had an enormous impact on defining the concept of modern architecture for a popular audience.

[52] Burns's most notable Los Angeles developments, all in partnership with Marlow, were Westside Village, Toluca Wood and Windsor Hills.

[53]Figures from the National House Agency (1944), reproduced in *Postwar Housing in California* (Sacramento: State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, June 1945). Based on

reports made by Project Committees on Postwar Home Building in Northern California and Southern California. Lead members included David B. Bohannon and Fritz B. Burns.

[54] *Postwar Housing in California* , 34. For an excellent account of spaciousness in American housing, see Sandy Isenstadt *The Modern American House: Spaciousness and Middle Class Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[55] *Postwar Housing in California*, 34.

[56] The Fritz B. Burns Research Division, established in 1943, was without precedent in the home-building industry. Directed by builder Joseph Schulte, the Burns Research Division not only attempted to forecast future trends in the housing market, but explored the efficiency and viability of new materials through laboratory testing of products, designs, and construction methods. The Research Division produced booklets such as "Fix it Yourself" (1944), all aimed at home owners looking for guidance on repairs and home improvements. Burns found a wide audience and support, and his pamphlets were often sponsored by Los Angeles-area manufacturers, merchants, and appliance firms in exchange for endorsements within the text. For a brief mention of the activities of the Burns Research Division, see James Thomas Keene, *Fritz B. Burns and the Development of Los Angeles : The Biography of a Community Developer and Philanthropist* (Los Angeles: Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University and the Historical Society of Southern California, 2001): 104-105.

[57] Fritz B. Burns, *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (New York: Revere Copper and Brass, 1943): 12.

[58]Ibid., 14.

[59] Ibid., 4.

[60] Ibid., 12.

[61] Ibid., 12.

[62]Ibid., 14.

[63] Ibid., 10-11.

[64] Ibid., 13.

[65] Ibid., 10.

[66] For more on the FHA assistance and the trouble housing industry, see Gwendolyn Wright's chapter "New Suburban Expansion and the American Dream," in Wright, *Building the Dream* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1981).

[67] The FHA "Architectural Inspector" was directed to rate a house according to a standard Property Rating Grid, which consisted of the following categories of Physical Security: Structural Soundness, Livability and Functional Plan, Mechanical and Convenience Equipment, Natural Light and Ventilation, and Architectural Attractiveness. The later was recognized by the FHA as a "difficult" assessment, and inspectors were encouraged to "attempt to detach himself from his own sentiments in the matter, whether he be pro-modern or anti-modern, and attempt to base his rating upon the public appeal of this type of design." Adjustments (and rejections) were also made for Nonconformity as to Purpose and Design, and Nonconformity as to Lot Conformity (described as placing the garage toward the front of the property). See "Modern Design" in United States Federal Housing Administration *Technical Bulletin No. 2*., March 15, 1936, (Washington, D.C.: Federal Housing Administration / US GPO, 1936): 8-9.

[68]For the position on criteria and the tastes of the local market, the authors of "Modern Design" commented that "these questions will be answered differently in different parts of the

country…Much will depend upon the vitality of the movement as it appears in various localities and upon the strength of tradition and resistance to change with may variously exist. Where tradition is weak, change is likely to be more rapid, and novelty is more apt to run riot that where it is strong. On the other hand, where a strong tradition exists, the introduction of a new style is more apt to be attended with hazard from the point of view of ready marketability, unless the new manner happens to be closely allied in form and appearance to that tradition. Each office will, in the light of the considerations herein set forth, form or modify its conclusions as the circumstances in its own territory seem to warrant." See "Modern Design," 6-7.

[69] "Modern Design" in United States Federal Housing Administration *Technical Bulletin No. 2*., March 15, 1936, (Washington, D.C.: Federal Housing Administration / US GPO, 1936):1.

[70]Ibid., 1.

[71] The authors of "Modern Design" recognized that the American home, "though fairly modern in plan, wear the habiliments of tradition. Where this is true, the house will rarely be recognized as modern in the sense generally used. It will likely be found to be a house of unusual livability and convenience, but that it possesses any revolutionary qualities will rarely be surmised. Nevertheless, it cannot be overemphasized that such houses are modern in the elemental sense. In any truly stylistic development the movement is first dictated either by planning or by structural considerations. Exterior treatments are in fact merely labels of what has taken place elsewhere and are, therefore, secondary features of a style….A style which is merely a new decorative system, a new fashion in dressing an exterior, but which is divorced from planning or structural trend is very apartment to be short lived." See "Modern Design," 3-4.

[72] See Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1981): 251.

[73] Burns, *Livable Homes,* 14.

[74] A $1 admission fee was initially charged, though it was later lowered to 35 cents; Burns donated a great deal of this income to Los Angeles charities. James Thomas Keene, *Fritz B. Burns and the Development of Los Angeles : The Biography of a Community Developer and Philanthropist (*Los Angeles : Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University and the Historical Society of Southern California, 2001): 107; Keane cites the *Architectural Forum* article March 1947.

[75] For example, Bullocks' decorator Amy Ames and Barker Brothers provided interior decoration and furnishings. Other collaborators included Garret Eckbo, who offered a new look for landscaping.

[76] The *Los Angeles Times* ran a series by Beatrice Lamb, "Reveling: The Post War Wonder House in Los Angeles." *Los Angeles Times* 31 March 1946: E8. National coverage appeared the *New York Post*, *Architectural Forum* (Mar 1946), *Architectural Record* (April 1946), *Life* and *House Beautiful*. Most publications conveyed a palpable sense of excitement, praising Burns's creation as the fulfillment of war-time promise and the harbinger of designs to come. The house was anticipated to show for a two-year period in Los Angeles, though its immense popularity kept it open until 1951, when it was remodeled and re-conceptualized as the "Post-Postwar House." For local coverage of the Post-Postwar House, see 'The home of tomorrow,' Wilshire Boulevard and Highland, Los Angeles, California: architect, Welton Becket & Associates, builder, Fritz Burns, interiors by Barker Bros." *Architectural Digest* 13 (Jan 1951): 105-112. For national coverage, see "The POST-Postwar House." *House Beautiful* 93 (Oct 1951): 196-203.

[77] The First Postwar House. *House Beautiful* 88 (May 1946): 84.

[78] Ibid., 82.

[79] Ibid., 82-83.

[80] Elizabeth Gordon, "You Should Dream Better Dreams." *House Beautiful* 88 (May 1946): 81.

[81] "The First Postwar House." *House Beautiful* 88 (May 1946): 82.

[82] Ibid., 82-123.

[83] Beatrice Lamb, "Reveling: The Post War Wonder House in Los Angeles." *Los Angeles Times* 31 March 1946: E8.

[84] For coverage of the Post-Postwar House, see "The POST Postwar House." *House Beautiful* 93 (Oct 1951): 196-203.

[85] For an interpretation of Burns and his "marketing genius," see Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000): 315.

[86]Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 233.

**Chapter III: Setting the Pace**

[1] The Case Study House Program was launched with John Entenza's manifesto published in *Arts & Architecture* 1944; by January 1945, Entenza had commissioned a group of young architects to build prototype Case Study houses on land he had purchased in Santa Monica. None of Case Study architects participated in *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter Program, and few (with the exception of William Wurster, A. Quincy Jones, and Frederick Emmons) were ever published in *House Beautiful*. For a full account of Entenza's Case Study House Program see Esther McCoy *Case Study Houses* (Hennessey & Ingalls: Santa Monica, 1977); and ed. Elizabeth A.T. Smith,

*Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1989).

[2] May was descended from both Anglo and Spanish settlers who held Spanish land grants in California. His father, Charles May, worked for San Diego Gas and Electric for most of his life, eventually earning the post as Vice President. May's mother was Beatrice Magee May, who descended from the Pedrorena and Estudillo families, both of which held large grants of ranch land in Southern California. For May's biography, see Cliff May and Marlene Laskey, *The California Ranch House: Oral History Transcript* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984): 10, 30.

[3] One of May's childhood playmates was Robert Churchill; the architect Irving Gill had designed a home for the Churchill family on Albatross Street in San Diego.

[4] May also recounted visiting Irving Gill's own house quite often with Mr. Styris. May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 46.

[5] May specifically stated that he wanted to create modern housing that contained everything that Gill's did not, particularly a reference to Spanish tradition. This was May's interpretations of Gill's work; architectural historians such as Thomas S. Hines have argued that Gill's architecture was actually infused with a regional sensibility that May cleary did not see. For more on Gill, see Thomas S. Hines, *Irving Gill and the Architecture of Refor*m (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2000).

[6] May recalled that he could have alternatively had a career in music, as his jazz band was tremendously successful in the early 1930s. For more on May and music, see May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*.

[7] Ibid., viii.

[8] Smith would eventually fund May's tracts in Riviera Ranch (Brentwood), Sullivan Canyon Ranch (West Los Angeles), and Woodacres in Santa Monica. Ibid., ix.

[9]Ibid.,: 183. For more on Schindler and Neutra, see Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[10] May's status as the "father of the ranch house" has been forwarded most often by Alan Hess, see *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004). Other notable architectural surveys, including that of Clifford Clark, give May priority. For May's view of other Southern California designers who were simultaneously exploring the ranch house as a type, see May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 188-89.

[11]Ibid., 187.

[12] Ibid., ix.

[13] Ibid., xi.

[14]*Western Ranch Houses* was an immediate success, selling over 50,000 copies. Ibid., 209.

[15] Cliff May. *Sunset Western Ranch Houses.* [alternate title: *Ranch Houses*] (San Francisco: Lane Pub. Co., 1946): ix.

[16]Ibid.

[17]May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 29-30.

[18] May was first published in *House Beautiful* in 1940, though it is possible that Gordon directly met May through Maynard Parker, who according to May, would "find houses for [*House Beautiful*]." May wrote that "[Maynard Parker] had good taste, and he showed Miss Gordon more than my share of houses for her to choose from." May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 208.

[19] May received a tremendous boost from *Sunset Magazine's* publication of his Arthur Gaynes House, an early adobe residence in San Diego. *Sunset Magazine* (March 1936): 21.

[20] In 1940, House Beautiful published short features on May's Lily Pond House and his E.S. Goodrich House, both completed ca. 1937 in Riviera Ranch just off Sunset Boulevard. May's house at 1867 Mandeville Canyon Road, in the same development as the other two, was first published in *California Arts and Architecture* in August 1939 (cover); in *Architectural Forum* (October 1939): 296; in *Building Contractor* (October 1940); and in *American Home* (May, 1942):17.

[21] In fact, May's homes appeared in at least thirty-six *House Beautiful* issues between 1940 and 1965, compared to thirty-four in *Sunset* between 1936 and 1965. While *California Arts & Architecture* was an early supporter of May, he was not published in the magazine after 1940, a date that roughly coincides with John Entenza's editorship and his shift toward the high-style modernism of the Case Study House program. Despite this, May received a great deal of press elsewhere into the mid-1950s; his work appeared in professional journals such as *Architectural Forum*, *Architectural Digest* (both beginning 1939) and *Architectural Record* (beginning 1940), in shelter magazines such as *The American Home* (1935), *House & Garde*n (1940) and *Better Homes & Gardens* (1944), in builder's magazines such as *Western Building* (1940), and in popular press such as *Life* (1945).

[22] May served as House Beautiful's construction consultant from 1946 to July 1952. See *House Beautiful* mastheads for these years.

[23] May published his home in *Western Ranch Houses* under the title of "Ranch House Classic." In his personal writings and recollections, he referred to his own houses by number; this was Cliff May #2. For the numbering of May's own houses, see May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*.

[24] The 1944 publicity included a write-up in *Architectural Forum*, and near simultaneous coverage in at least fifteen other journals (including four cover stories), and was featured as the "Ranch House Classic" in May's 1946 book, *Western Ranch Houses*.

[25] May later named the tract Riviera Ranch.

[26] The Riviera Ranch development is located in the Brentwood neighborhood of west Los Angeles. May's home was one of twenty-four ranch houses that he built in this area between 1937 and 1950.

[27] "It's only one acre but it's a whole kingdom." *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 75.

[28] When the house was completed in 1939, Cliff and Jean May had two daughters, Marilyn and Hilary. By 1951, the Mays had a third daughter, Melanie, and an infant son, Michael. "Our House is Always Full of Children," *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 98-99, 162.

[29]See *Architectural Forum* (Dec 1944):13; and Cliff May *Western Ranch Houses* (San Francisco: Lane Pub. Co., 1958. Reprinted Santa Monica, CA : Hennessey & Ingalls, 1997):24.

[30] Cliff May Archives, UCSB: Plans for CM#3, Sheet 4 and Sheet 6.

[31] These were made by Vimcar Steel Sash Co and Libby-Owens-Ford Co.

[32] This house had 3,800 square feet of living space, with another 3,272 in other buildings (including workshops and stables). For a comprehensive study of spaciousness and the modern house, see Sandy Isenstadt, "Little Visual Empire: Private Vistas and the Modern American House," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997).

[33] The large freezer made it possible to buy food in bulk or wholesale to save cost and shopping time. During World War II, widespread food rationing led the May family and their neighbors to store large quantities of food there. See "Here's how we get along without servants," *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 84-85; Cliff May, "A freezer revolutionize our marketing and eating," Ibid., 88-89, 166-168.

[34]Jean May, "We eat all over the house." *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 82-83, 181.

[35]Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses* (San Francisco: Lane Pub. Co., 1958. Reprinted Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1997):27.

[36]Ibid., 28.

[37]Patricia Guinan, "Nice People come from Nice Homes." *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 73.

[38]Ibid., 73.

[39]Helen Weigel Brown, "Meet a family that really knows how to live." *House Beautiful* 88 (Apr 1946): 75.

[40] Cliff May was the Construction Consultant for *House Beautiful* from at least 1946 to August 1952. See *House Beautiful* masthead for these years.

[41] The plans date between 1945 and 1947, 1945-1947, drawn by J. Roth. May Archives: Drawings for the Pace Setter 1948, Riviera Ranch, Brentwood. The plans also contain hand-written notes between May and the *House Beautiful* staff regarding plants, color material to give "livability to a room which is used three times a day, 7 days a week."

[42] The *Sunset Magazine* Headquarters are located in Menlo Park, California. May designed this commercial property and office space very much in the vein of a California ranch house.

[43]May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 212.

[44]"A House to set the pace…in all climates…for all budgets." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 61.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Designed and built by May, the Pace Setter was furnished by manufacturers and advertisers who received priority to display their goods into the house. Edward Wormely designed much of the furniture (as an extension of his Dunbar line). Paul Frankl, with whom May worked since 1938, designed a portion of the interior and offered sound advice on "how to bring indoors outdoors." Although the design was May's, the house was decorated by the editorial staff at *House Beautiful*, and William Manker served as the "colorist," lending his expert advice on the color styling of the interior. Doug Baylis provided landscape design and site planning, as he was also concurrently working on the re-design of May's Ranch House Classic.

[47]"The Facts about this Modern Ranch House." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 67-69, 150.

[48]The average square footage for houses built between about 1946 and 1950 was 1,100; the median cost was $9,000. The Pace Setter had about 5,570 square feet of living space, and the cost of construction was nearly $50,000. May estimated that the enclosed areas cost $10 to $15 per square foot to build, with the other areas roughly half that cost.

[49]"The Facts about this Modern Ranch House." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 68.

[50]Ibid., 68.

[51]May, *Sunset Western Ranch Houses* (1946): 152.

[52]May, *Western Ranch Houses* (1958): 25.

[53]"Outdoor Climate Control." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 72-73.

[54]Both the sky shade and the wind shutters became important architectural features when *House Beautiful* asked May, in a separate article, "Could You Build the Pace-Setter House in a Cold

Climate?" May argued that such multi-climate design could indeed be achieved; his ranch house could work in cold climates, with some adaptations: to siting, heating plant, insulation, weather-stripping, insulated glass, storm sash, indoor laundry, in-floor radiant heating (both indoor and in the exterior courtyard). In fact, this Pace Setter was later modified for cold climates, and at the time of the publication was under construction in Wichita. A second example was constructed several years later in Lubbock, Texas, also modified to meet the colder weather and harsh winds of north Texas. See May's devices in "The Garden Room," *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 65.

[55] "The Advantages of Turning Your Back on the World." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 89,132.

[56] Ibid.

[57] "The Master Suite." *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 98-101, 144.

[58] The maid's room eventually disappeared from May's smaller houses, but here indicated the social class of the intended client and the fact that domestic help was still hired in certain socio-economic circles.

[59]For May's attempt to blend the past and present by utilizing historical motifs, see "How a House Develops a Theme Song," *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948): 103.

[60]May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 214.

[61]May did not recall which charity benefited. May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 214.

[62] Mr. and Mrs. Neil Monroe of RIT dyed, who already lived in one of May's houses in Riviera Ranch, purchased the Pace Setter shortly after its public debut.

[63]May and Laskey, *California Ranch House*: 218.

[64] Derivatives of the Pace Setter 1948 appeared in Southern California (including the neighboring house, built for May's friend Austin Peterson, who was producer for *You Asked for It* television show), in Ohio, in Knoxville, in Bartlesville, Oklahoma for the chairman of the board of Philips Petroleum, K.S. "Boots" Adams, in Lubbock, Texas, in Pendelton, Oregon, in San Diego, and he planned one for New Orleans but client died before the foundation was poured. As derivatives, *House Beautiful* and May created a "Pacesetter House for All Climates" and a "Pacesetter House for Limited Budgets," which was advertised in the *Los Angeles Times* as the "Pricesetter." For this coverage, see *The Los Angeles Times,* 29 January 1950: E2.

[65]"Why this House is a Pace-Setter" *House Beautiful* 90 (Feb 1948):71.

[66] "House Beautiful Pace-Setter House for 1949" *House Beautiful* 91 (Nov 1949): 195.

[67] "How to look at a Pace-Setter House." *House Beautiful* 91 (Nov 1949): 201.

[68] The Climate Control Program was first publicly announced in October 1949, though Gordon and her staff began research and data collection in approximately August 1947. For the first articles on Climate Control, see Elizabeth Gordon, "What climate does to YOU and what you can do to CLIMATE," *House Beautiful* (Oct 1949): 131.

[69] "How to look at a Pace-Setter House." *House Beautiful* 91 (Nov 1949): 199.

[70] "The Great Room." *House Beautiful* 91 (Nov 1949): 206.

[71] Ibid., 206

[72] "The Outdoor Living Room." *House Beautiful* 91 (Nov 1949): 210.

**Chapter IV: The American Style**

[1] "The Station Wagon Way of Life." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950): 103.

[2] For *House Beautiful*'s introduction of the American Style, see Elizabeth Gordon, "The New American Style grew from America's Way of Life," *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950):123. For Gordon's principles of the American Style, see "How to Recognize The American Style," *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 158. Gordon arranged this essay into nine distinct points, perhaps in reference to architectural manifestos of the period that also used nine points. See Jose Sert, "Nine Points of Monumentality."

[3] Elizabeth Gordon, "The New American Style grew from America's Way of Life." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 122-123.

[4] James Marston Fitch, "The New American Architecture started 70 years ago." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 135.

[5] Ibid., 137. Fitch (1909-2000) was a historian, architect, author and educator, later know for his pioneering efforts in the field of historic preservation. He wrote for *Architectural Record* from 1936, and after serving in the United States Army during World War II, he was hired as an editor at *Architectural Forum.* During his military service, he received training in meteorology; his knowledge of weather lent a new perspective to his career as an architect, as seen in his article "Microclimatology" for *Forum,* in his book *American Building: The Forces That Shape It* (1948). Elizabeth Gordon, impressed by both his article and his book offered him a position as architectural editor for House Beautiful in 1949; he accepted, and became instrumental in launching *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control Program in October 1949. Fitch resigned from *House Beautiful* in 1953, following the "Threat to the Next America" controversy, and sailed to Italy with the intention of researching and writing a book on Horatio Greenough. Upon his return to the United States, Fitch joined the faculty of Columbia University in 1954, replacing Talbot

Hamlin (who retired). He taught architectural history and founded the country's first program in historic preservation. Fitch was at Columbia until his retirement in 1979, after which he founded the historic preservation program at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include *Walter Gropius* (1960), *Architecture and the Esthetics of Plenty* (1961) and *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World* (1982). For a brief biography of Fitch, see "James Marston Fitch," The James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation; and David Dunlap, "James Marston Fitch, 90, Architect and Preservationist," *New York Times Obituary* 12 April 2000.

[6] James Marston Fitch, "The New American Architecture started 70 years ago." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 258.

[7] Jean Murray Bangs, "Prophet without Honor." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 138.

[8] For Barr's assessment, see "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 February 1948. *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* XV no. 3 (Spring 1948). For Blake's assessment, in which he described himself and his colleagues as "card-carrying Modernists," see Peter Blake, *No Place Like Utopia: Modern Architecture and the Company We Kept* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

[9] "The Station Wagon Way of Life." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950).

[10] "You Asked These Questions about The American Style." *House Beautiful* 92 (July 1950): 35-37.

[11] Ralph Barton Perry (1876-1957) was an American philosopher and leader of the New Realist movement. A Vermont native, Perry attended Princeton and received his masters and doctorate degrees from Harvard. After teaching at Williams and Smith, he joined the Harvard faculty in 1902. By 1910, he was involved in the New Realism movement, which generally opposed

idealism. Perry is best known for defining the interest theory of value, and for his Pulitzer-prize winning two-volume biography *The Thought and Character of William James* (1935). Perry's *Characteristically American* (1949) was derived from a series of five lectures given at the University of Michigan in November and December 1948. His main purpose was to establish a unique national identity for the United States, and to create a cultural defense mechanism for use in the escalating Cold War. This was necessary, in his view, because a "totalitarian attack upon democracy" was beginning to belittle American achievements in politics, arts (including philosophy, literature and architecture), intellectual endeavors, and economics. For the contemporary reception of Perry's book, see Ralph H. Gabriel, "Book Review: Characteristically American," *American Literature* 23 no. 1 (Mar 1951): 139.

[12] Ralph Barton Perry, *Characteristically American* (New York: Knopf, 1949): 9.

[13] Ibid., 9.

[14] "What makes us Americans?" *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 124.

[15] Borrowing from Ralph Barton Perry, *House Beautiful* argued that it was the American democratic way to "level up," which included bringing living standards up and making "humble things elegant." The idea was the equal access to goods allowed "keeping up with the Joneses," as did the raising of "many symbols of plebeian living – the rocking chair and the hamburger, dungarees and the sofa bed – to the same degree of quality and elegance as caviar and ermine. That's what Americans mean by leveling up." For the idea of leveling up, see Mary Roche, "The American Ideal of Leveling Up," *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 128-133, 199-201.

[16] Frances Heard, "American taste has an unmistakable flavor." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 143.

[17] Ibid.

[18] In fact, most of the architects showcased by the magazine in this period, including the Pace Setter architects, did not produce a large body of theoretical writings. What existed (Alfred Browning Parker in the 1960s for example) was a more "common-sensical" approach, to use *House Beautiful* characterization.

[19] Elizabeth Gordon, "The New American Style grew from America's Way of Life." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950):123.

[20] Ibid.

[21] "You don't need to take our word for all of this!" *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 144.

[22] Ibid., 215. The list included: Dr. Ralph Linton, Sterling Professor of Anthropology at Yale University, who argued that American culture was reaching maturity; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., social critic and Professor of History at Harvard, whose *Paths to the Present* (1949) established that the American idea of social mobility was translatable to design hierarchy; Henry Steele Commager, a historian and public intellectual, who argued in *The American Mind* (1950) "that art should have its roots in native soil and should reflect the homely concerns of the common people…;" Lewis Mumford, whose *The Brown Decades* (1931) established the trajectory of modern architecture (beginning in the late nineteenth century), and whose "American Taste" from *Harper's Monthly* (October 1927) argued that "taste, regarded in the large, is not something that can be cultivated in an old curiosity shop or a museum: it is a much more robust and fundamental matter than this, and it has its roots not in historic treatises and guidebooks, but in the myths of religion, the needs of social life, the technic of industry, and the daily habits of a people;" Constance Rourke, was a historian, anthropologist, and critic. In *The Roots of American Culture*

(1942) she recognized that all cultures have at some time been subject to foreign influence, but "the center of growth of any distinctive culture is to be found within the social organism and is created by peculiar and irreducible social forces….whether or not we derived our early motivating ideas from Europe, these have been shaped to our own distinctive ends;" Meyric R. Rogers, in *American Interior Design*, acknowledged the American debt to European sources, but argued that we adapted and modified them to "give them the stamp of our own character; John A. Kouwenhove, in *Made in America*, wrote that "As a nation we have often been hesitant and apologetic about whatever has been made in America in the vernacular tradition. Perhaps a time has come when more of us are ready to accept the challenge offered to the creative imagination by the techniques and forms which first arose among our own people in our own land; and Samuel Barlow, a composer who argued that "when it comes to judging the expressions of national characteristics, particularly in works of art, the striking validity of nationalism cannot be denied…the local idiom is there of necessity, conditioned by the local material, the inherited and basic shapes, the reflection so of the familiar type. Whatever borrowings are done must be done to the end of a humble usefulness."

[23] "How to recognize The American Style." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 158.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Jean Murray Bangs and Dr. Ralph Linton, "Naturalism," *House Beautiful* 92 (Nov 1950): 192.

[26] "How to recognize The American Style." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 158.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] "The New American Style grew from America's Way of Life." *House Beautiful* 92 (May 1950): 123.

[31] The 1950 Pace Setters were in San Mateo, California, just south of San Francisco. David D. Bohannon (1898-1995) was a community planner and housing developer in the San Francisco Bay area. Born in 1898 in San Francisco, Bohannon was educated in public school system of California. In his early career, he manufactured various metal products. He entered the real estate and development market in 1925. From 1928, he was head of the David D. Bohannon Organization: Community Developers and Builders, headquartered in San Mateo. One of his major contributions was a defense housing project with 212 homes for Navy workers in Sunnyvale, completed in 1941. His 1500-unit project in San Lorenzo, California broke all building records; at one time his construction team was able to produce one house every forty minutes. Like the Levitt family, Bohannon was resourceful in dealing with wartime shortages of materials; he purchased his own tract of timber in Humboldt County. For more on Bohannon's role in defense housing see Joseph B. Mason, *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980.* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1982):31, 35. Bohannon's notable later projects included: the Bohannon Business Center, Hayward, California; the Bohannon Industrial Park, Menlo Park; Bay Center Industrial Park, San Lorenzo; Mayfair Heights, San Jose; Westwood, Westwood Oaks, and Park Westwood, Santa Clara; El Cerrito Manor, Hillsdale; the Hillsdale Shopping Center, San Mateo; San Lorenzo Village, Alameda County; and Montgomery Estates and Tahoe Tyrol, Lake Tahoe. He was also active in the Urban Land Institute, the National Association of Home Builders (and like Fritz Burns, was a past president), and the National Association of Realtors. Bohannon was named to California Building Industry Hall of Fame. In 2007, his company was

still in operation under the name Bohannon Development Company in San Mateo, California. For reference to Bohannon's biography, see *Who's Who in America.* For examples of contemporary coverage for his work, see "Converted War Housing, San Francisco," *Architectural Forum* 10 (1943): 69-75; and "Community Builders with Developments in several Price Ranges," *Architectural Forum* 90 (1949): 136-9. For more on Bohannon's role in defense building, see Mason, *History of Housing*.

[32] Edwin Wadsworth designed the first and third of the Pace Setters for 1950, with assistance from Germano Milano. Marcus Stedman designed the second, with assistance from Wadsworth and Milano. Thomas Church provided the landscape design for all three homes. Edwin A. Wadsworth (1909-1999) was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, where he graduated in 1937. Wadsworth served in the United States Navy during World War II, and later served in the United States Naval Reserve. He was the engineer of public works in Santa Barbara County. In the 1950s, Wadsworth was David D. Bohannon's supervising architect. In the 1960s, he designed custom homes, most notably in Woodside California, where his office was located. He was known for his pioneering use of pole framing in residential construction, and is credited with more than forty pole houses, 150 other custom homes, and ten churches in California. See "Obituary," *Los Altos Town Crier* 18 August 1999.

[33] "The 3 Big Ideas of 1950." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950): 85.

[34] As with other Pace Setter houses, Thomas Church provided site planning and landscape design. Decoration and Furnishings were by Warde Corley of W. & J. Sloan, San Francisco. *House Beautiful*'s Color Stylist William Manker was also consulted. Many of the furnishings that were

on display as part of the Pace Setter program were designed by Everett Brown of the Grand Rapids Furniture Maker' Guild.

[35] "3 Pace-Setter Houses and what they mean to you." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950): 86-87.

[36] The tight suburban lot required a moderately sized foot print, not to exceed 1600 square feet.

[37] Mary Roche, "The American Style has Hidden Performance." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950): 96-99.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "The American Style in a Pace-Setter House." *House Beautiful* 92 (June 1950): 92.

[42] "A $25,000 Pace-Setter House proves that ideas – not dollars – make better living." *House Beautiful* 92 (July 1950): 48-54.

[43] Ibid., 48.

[44] Ibid., 48.

[45] Ibid., 51.

[46] Ibid., 48.

[47] "Presenting *House Beautiful*'s Third Pace-Setter House for 1950," *House Beautiful* 92 (Aug 1950): 93; Marion Gough, "A 'Cautious' Pace-Setter." *House Beautiful* 92 (Aug 1950): 94-99.

[48] Marion Gough, "A 'Cautious' Pace-Setter." *House Beautiful* 92 (Aug 1950): 94.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Julius Gregory (1875-1955) was born in Sacramento, California in 1875. He studied Mechanical Engineering at the University of California, and began a practice in architecture around 1911. He joined the AIA in 1921, and later became a Fellow. Gregory established his practice in New York around 1911, with offices on Park Avenue and later on Madison Avenue (near the *House Beautiful* offices). He had been in practice for forty-two years when he retired in 1953, shortly after completing the Pace Setter House. He was a consultant for *House and Garden*, and the architectural consultant for *House Beautiful* until October 1952. Apart from his residential commissions, the most noted of which was his design for Alfred Knopf (Purchase, New York), he designed a number of churches in New York. His *New York Times* obituary from 1955 described him as a "transitional architect…often adapting newer concepts to traditional styles…a bridge to the designs of later, modern architects." For Gregory's brief biography, compiled by his son Jules (a practicing architect), see "Julius Gregory," Baldwin Memorial Archive of American Architects; and Julius Gregory, file, AIA Archives.

[52] The Pace Setter 1951 was at 57 Judson; Gordon lived about one-half mile away, at 231 Clinton in a house designed by Henry Eggers, the Pace Setter architect in 1953.

[53] The sheaf of wheat was inspired by the *Index of American Design* (published by the National Gallery in 1953). The motif was embroidered on table cloths, printed on household stationery, painted on the family station wagon, and embedded in plastic lighting fixtures. This began a *House Beautiful* decorative trend that would continue in the Pace Setters for the next decade. See "Pace-Setter Fabrics in the American Style," *House Beautiful* 93 no 5 (May 1951): 153.

[54] "The new American Style puts people first." *House Beautiful* 93 (May 1951): 114.

[55] Ibid., 114-115.

[56] Ibid., 114.

[57] Ibid., 114-115.

[58] For the complete magazine issue devoted to "Naturalism," see *House Beautiful* 92 (Nov 1950).

[59] As they had often done before, the *House Beautiful* staff gathered sales data on the best-selling merchandise and consulted several "social surveys." They found "a strong public preference for Naturalism in colors, in manners and behaviors, in forms and designs, in materials." Staff at *House Beautiful* commenced their research during the summer of 1950, and investigated "best-sellers in home furnishings" from the previous two years, at all price points from "completely mass" to "high fashion decorator types." Their findings were stunning, though, according to *House Beautiful* "not a total surprise." They concluded that the best-selling lines for all of the manufacturers investigated were "invariably naturalistic in design." For more on Naturalism and its growing popularity in the 1950s, see Jean Murray Bangs and Dr. Ralph Linton, "Naturalism," *House Beautiful* 92 (Nov 1950): 191.

[60]Elizabeth Gordon, "House Beautiful's Forecast of the Styles for the Fifties." *House Beautiful* 93 (Nov 1951): 192.

[61] Jean Murray Bangs and Dr. Ralph Linton, "Naturalism." *House Beautiful* 92 (Nov 1950): 192.

[62] From Wright, *An Autobiography*, cf. *House Beautiful* 93 (Jul 1951): 39.

[63] See Hitchcock's speech at the Musuem of Modern Art Symposium in 1948, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 February 1948. *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* xv no. 3 (Spring 1948).

[64] Mary Roche, "A taste for Naturalism produces a new feeling for Materials." *House Beautiful* 93 (Mar 1951): 117.

[65] Gordon to Wright, 05 December 1950. Hill Papers, Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.

[66] Elizabeth Gordon, "House Beautiful's Forecast of the Styles for the Fifties." *House Beautiful* 93 (Nov 1951): 193.

[67] Ibid., 274.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70]James Marston Fitch, "A New Kind of Beauty." *House Beautiful* 93 (Jan 1951): 36.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 45.

**Chapter V: The Threat to the Next America**

[1] In her unpublished autobiography, Gordon wrote that the key to her success, and to her seemingly endless source of story ideas, came from her ability to "throw a wide net," in which she examined the "peripherals of a subject. Paying attention to peripherals such as footnotes can lead to wonderful new aspects of the same subject or even little-related subjects. Call it 'detective work' – following a hint of another idea to discover a whole new category never dreamed of before. Think of how a cobweb looks – a center core has lines reaching out in ALL directions. Following each single line from the center may prove worthless OR very valuable. Using these principles, you never run out of ideas. For an editor of a monthly magazine it is an invaluable system. And it is fun, plus very productive." For more on Gordon's editorial strategies, see

Elizabeth Gordon to Indira Berndtson, 17 September 1996. Frank Lloyd Wright Archives; and Hill Papers; MS 241.A.3.133, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon, Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas.

[2] Lyman Bryson (1888-1959) was a noted cultural theorist, educator and media-public affairs specialist who taught at Columbia Teacher's College, worked for the Office of War Information during World War II, and consulted on public affairs for CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). Like Gordon, he was committed to adult education through public forum. Bryson was particularly interested in radio and literature delivered in "plain English." Bryson authored several related books, including: *Adult Education* (1936), *Which Way America?* (1939), *The New Prometheus* (1941), *Science and Freedom* (1946), and *The Next America* (1952).

[3] Lyman Bryson, "The Next America now brings: The greatest good – and goods – for the greatest number." *House Beautiful* 95 (Apr 1953):172.

[4] Ibid., 113.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 112-115, 172.

[8] Born in Scranton Pennsylvania in 1917, Joseph Barry was trained in the arts and as a librarian at the University of Michigan. He served in the United States Army during World War II, but retired to a writer's life in Paris. It is unclear how he came to meet Getrude Stein, but he was clearly close to her and her partner Alice B. Toklas; Barry's *Left Bank Right Bank* (1951) is filled with reference to Stein, Toklas, and many major artists and literary figures who were in Paris during the 1940s. Stein must have introduced him to many of these people, just as she introduced him to

Pablo Picasso. When Stein died, Barry arranged for Toklas to write cooking recipes for *House Beautiful*, which eventually were published along with biographical reminiscences as *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954). Barry also introduced Elizabeth Gordon and *House Beautiful*'s architectural editor John deKoven Hill to Toklas, and the three of them traveled in Paris and across Europe together. Barry (apparently disliked by many on the staff because of what Hill described as his "cocky" and "opportunistic" nature) was employed at *House Beautiful* for only six years, and returned to Paris in 1958. He was most famous for his cultural commentary in *Left Bank Right Bank* (1951) and *The People of Paris* (1966). For biographical notes on Barry, see Joseph Barry, *The House Beautiful Treasury of Contemporary Homes* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1949). For John deKoven Hill's account of Barry, Stein and Toklas, and Hill's European travels, see John deKoven Hill and Maggie Valentine, *John deKoven Hill* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, c1997): 284-87.

[9] Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation was designed and built between 1945 and 1952. For Barry's interview with Le Corbusier and his critical assessment of the Unite de HAbatacion in Marseilles, see Joseph Barry, *Left Bank Right Bank: Paris and Parisians (*New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1951): 162-75.

[10]Joseph Barry, "The Next American will be The Age of Great Architecture." *House Beautiful* 95 (Apr 1953): 117.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (April 1953):126.

[13] Regarding Gordon's views on Philip Johnson, she wrote to Curtis Besinger in 1986: "In my famous (or infamous) article in 1953 (which I enclose) I was really pointing to the Modern Museum and P.J. for they were having a tremendous influence that was shaping the thinking of other editors who could not judge good architecture (or floor plans) for themselves. The MOMA & P.J. were leading the press around by the nose…I can see how a person who had witnessed the growth of fascism in his country could think my article was fascist in tone. Actually it was anti-fascist in its overall message." Letter, Gordon to Besinger, handwritten 11/26/86, MS 241.A.3.133, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas).

[14] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (April 1953):127.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 129.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 126.

[22] Ibid., 129.

[23] Ibid., 250.

[24] Gordon had long been associated with the AIA, particularly through *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control program, which ran in *House Beautiful* between 1949 and 1951. The AIA published and disseminated all of *House Beautiful*'s climate research, data, and conclusions; and Gordon

frequently gave lectures at their meetings. After the controversy of 1953, she was essentially ostracized. The one exception seemed to be Henry Saylor, the editor of the *Journal of the AIA*; his letters to the editor that followed "The Threat" essay indicated that he remained supportive of Gordon's viewpoints while many within the rather conservative professional organization shunned her.

[25] See "Obituary, Elizabeth Gordon," *The Economist* 30 September 2000:101; in Clippings, Hill Papers.

[26] Curtis Besinger to Robert Venturi, 5 June 1986. MS 241.A.3.137-39, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection).

[27] "Public Opinion on 'The Threat to the Next America" *House Beautiful* 95 (June 1953): 29.

[28] Ibid.

[29] For the accusation irrationality, see W.C. English, Jr.'s letter; Henry Hill of San Francisco specifically accused Gordon of attacking Mies in an effort to boost consumption of possessions. See "Public Opinion on 'The Threat to the Next America," Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 91.

[31] Beginning in 1950, the Case Study Program, sponsored by John Entenza's *Arts and Architecture*, shifted its focus to promote steel-and-glass houses that drew from the precedent set by Mies, and in the California context, by Richard Neutra's Lovell Health House. The most famed and clearly Miesian examples were created between 1952 and 1960, and the most prominent architects featured during this second phase of the Case Study program included Raphael Soriano, Craig Ellwood, and Pierre Koenig. For more on the Case Study program, see

Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses 1945-62;* and Elizabeth A. T. Smith, ed., *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses.*

[32] For cancellations of subscription, see "Public Opinion on 'The Threat to the Next America," *House Beautiful* 95 (June 1953): 92. For this line, see Edward Farrell's letter in "More Readers' Mail on: the Threat to the Next America," *House Beautiful* 95 (July 1953): 6. Other respondents who questioned Gordon's judgment included Cecil D. Elliot [Asst Prof of Architecture, North Carolina State College], Donald H. Honn [architect, Tulsa], and James Klutz [Lumberman, Concord NC].

[33] "More Readers' Mail on: the Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (July 1953): 93.

[34] Though *House Beautiful* had in the past been friendly with the *Forum*, and Gordon's husband was the executive editor of its sister publication *House & Home*, Blake was highly critical of Gordon's views. This was in part because he was, as he wrote in *No Place Like Utopia,* a "card-carrying Modern architect," who counted among his friends and mentors Serge Chermayoff, Walter Gropius, Louis Kahn and Philip Johnson.

[35] "More Readers' Mail on: the Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (July 1953): 92.

[36] "Public Response." *House Beautiful* (July 1953): n.p.

[37] The complete list of signatures included: John Carden Campbell; David R. Mayes; Worley R. Wong, AIA; John W. Kruse, AIA; John W. Staley, JR, ASLA; Asa Hanamoto; Theodore Osmundson, JR, ASLA; Rex W. Allen, AIS; Robert Royston, ASLA; Lawrence Halprin; Edward Williams; William Corlett, AIA; Roger Sturtevant; Garrett Eckbo; Felix M. Warburg; Albert

Aronson, AIA; Terry Tong; Theodore C. Bernardi, AIA; Eva Low; William Wilson Wurster, AIA; R. Button Litton, JR, ASLA; Donn Emmons, AIA; George T. Rockrise; HL Vaughan ASLA; Margaret Rockrise; Henry Hill, AIA; Esther Born; and Albert Sigal. Complete letter and list of signatures from Curtis Besinger, letter to Gordon, MS 132, Wright Collection, Box 3. Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas.

[38] Letter to Gordon, MS 132, Wright Collection.

[39] Ibid.

[40] "Public Opinion on 'The Threat to the Next America" *House Beautiful* 95 (June 1953): 29.

[41] Ibid., 28.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 92.

[44] "More Readers' Mail on: the Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (July 1953): 6.

[45] "Public Opinion on 'The Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (June 1953): 94.

[46] Frank Lloyd Wright to Elizabeth Gordon, telegram sent from Phoenix on 24 [March?] 1953; Hill Papers. The telegram and subsequent letters are dated March 1954, though the "Threat" article did not run until April. *House Beautiful* subscribers received the issue ahead of the cover date; if Wright did not subscribe, the telegram date suggests that Gordon may have sent Wright an advanced copy. The advanced copy would not be surprising, as Gordon and Wright had corresponded several times in 1949 and 1950, and again in January 1953 for a discussion of "the choice between organic architecture and the International Style." Note that Jane Margolies incorrectly cites the dateline of the telegram as Spring Green, but it was actually sent from Phoenix and is dated by hand 3-24-53; the stamp reads Ariz 24 405P.

[47] Wright to Gordon, 27 March 1953. Hill Papers.

[48] With the exception of the 1946 article, Gordon rarely published Wright's work; this was likely due in part to an agreement between Wright and *Architectural Forum*, which Wright apparently revoked after 1953.

[49] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America." *House Beautiful* 95 (Apr 1953): 126.

[50] Gordon to Wright, 05 December 1950. Hill Papers. Wright had written to Gordon to express his displeasure with her series of articles on naturalism, which he felt "falsified the nature of organic architecture." Gordon was deeply affected by this, and likely took his criticism into account as she moved forward with her editorials of 1953.

[51]Diane Maddex, *Frank Lloyd Wright's House Beautiful* (New York: Hearst Books, 2000): 38-39.

[52] Fitch recounted: "I resigned from the editorial board of *House Beautiful* in the spring of 1953. The decisive issue was, of all things, whether the Gropian/Miesian/Bauhaus version of modern architecture was "communistic," hence somehow un-American, while that of the San Francisco Bay region which the magazine editorially supported was safely "American." I had argued for months against such an absurd posture, but realizing that the magazine, as the high-style end of the Hearst empire would inevitably be drawn into the red-baiting frenzy, I decided that I had no choice but to resign in protest. Cleo and I sold our recently completed and much publicized house, lock, stock and barrel, including the flowers in bloom in the garden and the pictures on the walls and sailed on the France on the very day that the Rosenbergs were executed for alleged conspiracy." For this account, and a brief biography of Fitch, see "James Marston Fitch," in *Brief Biography of James Marston Fitch*, The James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation.

[53] In addition to designing and directing the exhibit at the Los Angeles County Fair in 1954, Hill designed of many interiors that were featured in *House Beautiful* (and assisted other architects, including Harwell Hamilton Harris). He was named Pace Setter architect in 1960. For more on Hill, see my chapter "The Natural Progression of Things."

[54] Gordon to Besinger 26 November 1986, MS 241.A.3.133, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection).

[55] Esther McCoy, "Sim Bruce Richards," *Nature in Architecture* (San Diego Natural History Museum, April-June 1984).

[56] Elizabeth Gordon, "How Did I Get to Be Me?" Unpublished Autobiography. MS 241.A.3.135, Besinger Collection.

[57] In 1948, Henry Russell-Hitchcock likened Wright to the "Michelangelo of the twentieth century. Michelangelo was not good for his contemporaries and least of all, for his students. But Michelangelo, in a period of considerable confusion, was a master who looked forward, not to what was going to happen in ten years, but to what was going to happen in fifty years." For Hitchcock's assessment of Wright, see "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 February 1948. *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* xv no. 3 (Spring 1948): 10.

**Chapter VI: Architecture and the Individual**

[1] After the April 1953 "Threat to the Next America" controversy, Gordon and Wright resumed correspondence and visits. Gordon went to Taliesin on several occasions, and when Wright was in New York, they often had dinner or cocktails. For a sample of these social invitations, see

Masselink to Gordon to Wright, 15 April 1953; Gordon, 2 June 1953; Gordon to Wright, 11 October 1955. After Hill joined the *House Beautiful* staff, the connection between Gordon and Wright was cemented. For his contributions to *House Beautiful*, see Frank Lloyd Wright, "Frank Lloyd Wright Speaks Up," *House Beautiful* 95 (May 1953):86-88; 90; and Frank Lloyd Wright, "For a Democratic Architecture," *House Beautiful* 95 (Oct 1953): 316-317.

[2] Frank Lloyd Wright, "Frank Lloyd Wright Speaks Up," *House Beautiful* 95 (May 1953):88.

[3] Frank Lloyd Wright, "For a Democratic Architecture." *House Beautiful* 95 (Oct 1953): 316-317.

[4] Elizabeth Gordon, "Does Design Have Social Significance?" *House Beautiful* 95 (Oct 1953): 313.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Gordon was also likely aware of Paul Zucker's section on monumentality contained in *New Architecture and City Planning* (1944), in which the essays by Sert-Leger-Giedion and Kahn, along with Giedion's "The Need for a New Monumentality," appeared.

[7] See Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: United Nations Assembly." *New Yorker*, XXIX (March 14, 1953), 72.

[8] Elizabeth Gordon, "Does Design Have Social Significance?" *House Beautiful* 95 (Oct 1953): 315.

[9] Ibid., 230, 313.

[10] Ibid., 313.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 318.

[13] In the short term, Wright received instant press in *House Beautiful*. In the long view, Gordon (with significant aid of John deKoven Hill) was able to secure deals between Wright and Schumacher for a line of Taliesin fabrics, and between Wright and Martin Seynor for a new line of paints. She and Hill also worked closely with Heritage Henredon to develop a line of furniture.

[14] Wright was "offended" by the November 1950 issue of *House Beautiful*, which focused on Naturalism. No doubt he felt slighted, and thought he was not given his proper due as the "father" of the American movement. For his letter and Gordon's long apology, see Wright to Gordon 24 October 1950; and Gordon to Wright, 8 December 1950, The Taliesin Correspondence, Los Angeles, The Getty Center. Wright may also have felt rebuffed, since Gordon had to decline his proposal for *House Beautiful* to sponsor one of his projects in the Southwest. For this exchange, see Wright to Gordon, 24 April 1950; and Gordon to Wright 9 May 1950, The Taliesin Correspondence, Los Angeles, The Getty Center. Their correspondence came to an abrupt halt after May 1950, but started again after Gordon's "Threat to the Next America" came out in 1953.

[15] Frank Lloyd Wright, "AIA Acceptance Address for the Gold Medal." Reprinted in *Collected Writings 1939-1949*: 324-30.

[16] Gimbel's hosted the first installation of *Sixty Years*, with the support of Arthur C. Kaufmann, the cousin of Wright's Fallingwater client Edgar Kaufman, Sr. Kaufmann is credited with conceiving idea for the exhibit. For more on the various installations, see Wright's correspondence in chapter IV of ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Letters to Architects: Frank Lloyd Wright*, (Fresno: California State University Press, 1984).

[17] In 1954, the exhibit was installed in connection to Hollyhock House in Los Angeles. The timing likely coincided with Hill's groundbreaking design for House Beautiful's exhibition pavilion "The Arts of Daily Living" at the Los Angeles County Fair.

[18] Wright wrote that organic architecture had "flourished and floundered" at the turn of the century, only to fall into the "shadow cast upon modern organic architecture by the then new Museum of Modern Art [when] the International Style was named." Frank Lloyd Wright, "Frank Lloyd Wright Speaks Up." *House Beautiful* 95 (May 1953):90.

[19] Wright laid out six principles of organic architecture in 1908: simplicity and repose; individuality; harmony of house and site; nature as the source for color; nature of materials brought out; and the increasing value of a "house of character."

[20] The chapter titled "In the Nature of Materials: A Philosophy" (*An Autobiograph*y, 1943) was of specific instructional value to any emerging postwar architect. Here, Wright's addressed "five new resources:" spatial (interior room-space); new materials (glass); principle of continuity of structure (made possible by steel); the nature of materials (and use); and integral ornament (rather than applied). Wright's new resource of space, though not really new at all, brought forward his previous ideas of the "space within." He, like many designers in the same period, chose the word "livable" to describe an interior space that in turn must be considered part of the architecture. He was exploring ways in which the inside and outside could be truly merged, where walls would no longer provide a sense of barrier. Wright offered glass, also not really a new resource, as the instrument by which these walls would vanish. This was an endorsement of the window wall, something he had explored for decades, but had yet to perfect. To counter both "mass waste" and disjunction of structure, he lauded steel as the "prophet" of plasticity. Along with concrete, steel

could allow structure to be "united as one physical body." Thus, form and function would become one, and organic architecture could evolve. Wright argued that steel, like any other material, should be seen for its inherent and natural quality and beauty. He also commented on the notion of integral ornament, and wrote that "integral ornament is simply structure-pattern made visibly articulate." This, to Wright, was the most natural way of building.

[21] For simplicity, see Wright, *An Autobiography*, Book IV: Work, 144; for plasticity, see *An Autobiography*, Book IV: Work, 146; for the human as scale, see *An Autobiography*, Book IV: Work, 141, 145.

[22] Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture, Second Paper." *Architectural Record* 25 (1914): 405-413.

[23] Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, Book IV: Work, 141.

[24] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York, Horizon Press, 1953): 320-25. This volume includes the Princeton Lectures, 1930; The Chicago Art Institute Lectures, 1931; The London Lectures, 1939, and other essays.

[25] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Language of an Organic Architecture" in *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1953): 324.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 321.

[29] For Zevi's experience at Harvard, see Anthony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism* (New York: Norton, 2002). For more on the relationship between Zevi and Wright, see ed. Anthony

Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Europe and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[30] Bruno Zevi, *Towards an Organic Architecture* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1950): 72.

[31] In *Towards an Organic Architecture*, Zevi defined organic by examining its origins as a term, and its meanings for architectural scholars. He examined organic, as an adjective, from its first use by Louis Sullivan. He traced its meaning through Claude Bragdon (the editor of Sullivan's *Kindergarten Chats,*1934) and his 1915 lecture at the Art Institute of Chicago, entitled "Organic Architecture," to Sigfried Gideon's explanation of "organic architecture, whatever that may be," in *Space*, *Time and Architecture* (1941), to Walter Curt Behrendt's treatment in *Modern Building: Its Nature, Problems, and Forms* (1937). For Zevi on the organic, see his chapter titled "Meaning and Scope of the Term *Organic* in Reference to Architecture" in *Towards an Organic Architecture* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1950).

[32] Zevi, *Towards an Organic Architecture*: 69.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 72.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 125.

[37] Ibid.

[38] "*House Beautiful*'s Pace 1954 Pace Setter House." *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 217.

[39] Alfred Browning Parker, *You and Architecture: A Practical Guide to the Best in Building* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1965): 139.

[40] Rudolph Weaver (1880-1944) was the first director of the School of Architecture at the University of Florida at Gainesville. He received a Diploma in Architecture (1905) and a B.S. in Engineering (1919) from Philadelphia's Drexel Institute. He later studied at the Beaux-Arts Atelier Hambostle (1909) and at Harvard University (1925). He taught at the University of Illinois and the University of Idaho prior to coming to Florida in the fall of 1925. He also served as the Architect to the Florida Board of Control. His built works include buildings at: the State College of Washington; the University of Idaho; the University of Florida; the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind; the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (Florida A & M); and Florida State College for Women. For more on Weaver's works and biography, refer to Rudolph Weaver Architectural Records, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. It is unclear whether Weaver's break from the Beaux-Arts tradition was influenced by European educational trends known through Gropius and the Bauhaus, though the possibility certainly exists. It is interesting to note that Weaver was educated at an atelier of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, only to later abandon this method of training. For Weaver and the Beaux-Arts, see Alfred Browning Parker, Interview by author, 28 November 2000.

[41] Tom Martyn, "Architect, an interview with Alfred Parker," (Student paper, Miami-Dade Junior College, 1968).

[42] For example, one of Parker's design projects was included in the yearbook of the Florida Architects' Association, and he was inducted into the University Hall of Fame for receiving the Fine Arts Gold Medal. See Alfred Browning Parker, "Biographical Statement, Fine Arts Gold Medal," 2 April 1939, Private Collection of Randall Henning.

[43] Parker won an exchange scholarship to the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm in 1939; his stay was cut short by increasing political tensions in Europe at the time. In 1941, he was awarded a Pan American Airways Fellowship for travel in Mexico. His aims set forth in his application were to attend an institution in Mexico to study the system of architectural education, and secondly, to begin to understand and analyze the "truest culture of the people as evidenced by their architecture, music, sculpture, drama, literature, delineation, and the dance." Among the sites he visited were Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Mexico City, Puebla, Oaxaca, and Cuernavaca. During his travels, he collected over 600 black and white photographs and 200 color slides, which he hoped to exhibit in the United States. See Parker to John C. Cooper, Jr., Vice President at Pan American Airways, Inc. in New York, 20 March 1941, Henning Collection.

[44] Parker has noted that he was particularly interested in Swedish design because of the skillful integration of building with interior, and specifically the integration of furniture. Parker, Interview by author, 28 November 2000. For a published account of his interest, see "The influences that produced a Pace-Setting Architect," *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 210-211.

[45] Parker photographed Chichen Itza, Yucatan, presumably on this trip; he later sent the photos to Wright as an item of interest. He later sent photos of Teotihuacan. Parker to Wright, 24 April 1944, The Taliesin Correspondence.

[46] Wright was also featured in *Life* in 1938. *Architectural Forum*, *Time* and *Life* magazines were all owned by Time, Inc. In a personal interview with the author, Parker claimed that he was first exposed the works and ideas of Wright in the January 1938 *Architectural Forum*. He did not

make mention of Wright's work at Florida Southern College (Lakeland) which was begun in the same year. Parker, interview with author, 28 November 2000.

[47] *Time Magazine*, 17 Jan 1938.

[48] Parker to Wright, 5 February 1939, The Taliesin Correspondence.

[49] Parker was intimately familiar with Wright's theories, or "opinions" as Parker described them, and had read Wright's many books, as he indicated in his second letter to Wright in March 1944. Parker to Wright, 29 March 1944. The Taliesin Correspondence.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Wright was known for his radical pedagogical approach at Taliesin, announced in a prospectus in 1931 and a circular published in 1932. Among the practical lessons taught in the Taliesin Fellowship was the process in which new students would construct their own shelter (with their own hands and from found materials), a start to the "learning by doing" experience that would grow to include drafting and construction supervision on Wright's many projects.

[53] "They built this house for $1,218." *House Beautiful* 88 (March 1946): 106-07,136-37, 146-47.

[54] Since about 1940, Parker had been developing the idea of the tropical subsistence homestead, "a plan to love more easily, cheaply, and self-reliantly somewhat outside the System." The idea was to purchase a sizable plot of land (five acres), construct a small, low-cost home using native materials, and plant a garden from which a family could be fed. See Jack McClintock, "Success by Design: Alfred Browning Parker in Blueprint," *The Miami Herald* 26 May 1974. Clippings File, Private Collection of Randall Henning. Concurrent with his "war housing" project for his

family, Parker was designing a "small subsistence homestead" to be set on ten acres for a young woman. Parker to Wright, 20 July 1944. The Taliesin Correspondence.

[55] Wright to Parker, 23 May 1944. The Taliesin Correspondence.

[56] Parker to Wright, 19 June 1944. The Taliesin Correspondence.

[57] Ibid.

[58]During World War II, from 1942 to 1946, Parker was a Lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserves; he served as an intelligence officer. He was on shore station, working six days per week in Miami. For his military career, see Alfred Browning Parker, Biographical Data, Henning Collection.

[59] Marcie Ersoff, "An Architect Talks about his House." *The Miami Herald.* 3 May 1964: 21-F. Clippings File, Henning Collection.

[60] Parker, Interview by author, 28 November 2000. Records of Parker's correspondence with Wright and with Taliesin appear to have ended abruptly, with no recorded correspondence between May 1944 and 1 September 1949. The 1949 letters do indicate that Parker continued to send Wright an annual shipment of mangos for his birthday. For record of the correspondence, see Anthony Alofsin, ed. *Frank Lloyd Wright: An Index to the Taliesin Correspondence* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988): 286, 499.

[61] Parker graduated with a Bachelor's degree in architecture in 1939, and passed his licensing examine 14 June 1945. See Parker, Alfred Browning. Application for National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (N.C.A.R.B.); and "An Information as to Experience and Record in Professional Practice," 3 July 1945, Henning Collection. Parker opened his own practice in architecture on 1 January 1946 – the same day he was released from his Naval duties -

- at his newly completed home and studio on 27th Avenue in Miami. He was also became a member of the American Institute of Architects by 1946. Alfred Browning Parker, Biographical Data, Henning Collection.

[62] Alfred Browning Parker, "An Illustrated Credo." Speech given at the University of Toronto, 17 October 1960, Henning Collection.

[63] Parker expressed integrated design as the summation of all of these parts, though did not use this mathematical notation.

[64]Joseph A. Barry, "The Architecture of Humanism." *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 224.

[65] Parker graduated with a Bachelor's degree in architecture in 1939, and passed his licensing examine 14 June 1945. See Alfred Browning Parker, Application for National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (N.C.A.R.B.); and "An Information as to Experience and Record in Professional Practice," 3 July 1945, Henning Collection. For an estimate on the value of Parker's projects, see Joseph A. Barry, "The Architecture of Humanism," *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 224.

[66] Frank Lloyd Wright, Lecture, 1938. qtd in *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 228.

[67] Elizabeth Gordon to Parker, 27 October 1950. Alfred Browning Parker Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

[68] Parker's designs were chosen in 1954, 1956 (the mini-Pace Setter), 1959, and 1965.

[69] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 118.

[70] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 126.

[71] Parker later urged all architects to become more "ecologically oriented," and went on to explore design with climate and alternate energy sources. Parker, Interview by author, 28 November 2000.

[72] Alfred Browning Parker, "What is Architecture." n.d. Henning Collection.

[73] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 114.

[74] The Florida Keystone he acquired consisted of quarried blocks of random size and rejected carved pieces from previous building projects, some over fifty years before. These were offered to Parker by a stone contractor who was closing his shop and was otherwise going to bury his thirty-five year accumulation of material. "Descriptive Data for 1989 Louis Sullivan Award for Architecture," Royal Road File (Pace Setter 1954), Henning Collection.

[75] For example, Elizabeth Gordon arranged for the Mahogany Association, Inc. (Chicago, IL) to donate a great deal of wood to Parker, and sell the rest to him at wholesale prices. Much of the mahogany was used for the *persiana* doors (custom-made in Cuba), trim, windows, wall covering and custom furniture designed and built by Parker. The cypress was provided by Miami-based Tidewater Lumber & Supply Company, Inc. Parker, Interview by author, 28 November 2000. See also attributions in *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 276, 278, 289.

[76] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 144.

[77] Frances Heard, "How to Practice Perfection." *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 250.

[78] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 139.

[79] "The Influences that Produced a Pace-Setting Architect." *House Beautiful* 95 (November 1953): 210.

[80] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 136.

**Chapter VII: An Architecture of Specificity**

[1] Alongside Harwell Harris, Bruno Zevi also included William W. Wurster in this group of "prophets." See Zevi, Introduction to Lisa Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991): xvi.

[2] Of the other Pace Setter architects, Cliff May (Pace Setter 1948), Julius Gregory (Pace Setter 1951), Harwell Harris (Pace Setter 1955), John deKoven Hill (Pace Setter 1960), and Roger Rasbach (Pace Setter 1961) all had unorthodox or informal architectural training. Both May and Rasbach came out of the building professions; Gregory trained as a mechanical engineer though never received a degree; Harris trained as a sculptor and later as an apprentice to architect Richard Neutra; and Hill received his training as an apprentice under Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin. It is worth noting that May, Wadsworth (Pace Setter 1950), Stedman (Pace Setter 1950b), Henry Eggers (Pace Setter 1953), Harris (Pace Setter 1955), Vladimir Ossipoff (Pace Setter 1958), and Rasbach (Pace Setter 1961) all trained at point in their early careers in California.

[3] Harris's father, Frederick Harris, was an architect and rancher, and worked for many years in Redlands, California. Harris graduated from San Bernardino High School. For a detailed biography and detailed familial background, see Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*.

[4] Harris attested that although his father was a practicing architect, the elder Harris's interest had been more in building than designing or in the constructional rather than aesthetic nature of the profession. Harris never considered his father's profession as an influence on his own career (either his choice to become an architect or in the trajectory of his practice). For this, see Harwell

Hamilton Harris and Judy Stonefield, *The Organic View of Design* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985): 33.

[5] Harris discovered Sullivan through the director of Otis, Karl Howenstein. Harris recounted that his first encounter occurred when Howenstein shared an obituary for Louis Sullivan in 1924. According to Harris's recollection, at this point Sullivan was still unknown to Harris, but it was this obituary that awakened his interest in the architect. Harris later read Sullivan's *An Autobiography of an Idea.* This, as Lisa Germany has argued, likely "prepared him for his first encounter with the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright." See Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*; For the story of his introduction to Sullivan's work and ideas, see Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View.*

[6] Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 34.

[7] Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 43.

[8] Neutra had worked for Mendelsohn in Germany, so Harris's quick association between the work of the two designers was not surprising. For more on Neutra, including his time with Mendelsohn, see Thomas Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[9]For an account of Harris's first visit to the Hollyhock House, see Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 52-54; and Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*: 25.

[10] Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 55.

[11] According to Harris, Neutra, assisted by Harris and Ain, was instrumental in securing a Los Angeles installation of the International Style exhibition. Bullock's Wilshire was the local

sponsor and provided the venue. The exhibition ran in July and August 1932. For this account, see Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*: 4.

[12] Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 110. See, for example, his 1936 design for Edward De Steiguer in Pasadena.

[13] See for example, "Suggesting the Japanese," *House Beautiful* 75 (Oct 1934): 72-73.

[14] For a comprehensive bibliography on Harris, see "Chronological Harris Bibliography," in Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*. Harris was specifically published in *House Beautiful* several times between 1934 and 1938, before Gordon arrived as editor in 1941. Harris was regularly featured after 1944.

[15]Harris attested that Gordon approached him on the recommendation of James Marston Fitch; Fitch became the architectural editor at *House Beautiful* in 1949; it is not clear in what capacity Fitch and Gordon were associated before that time. For Harris's introduction to Gordon, see Harris and Stonefield, *Organic View*: 149. For the *House Beautiful* coverage of the Havens House, see "How to Judge Modern," *House Beautiful* 86 (Aug 1944): 49-57, 70-71.

[16] "How to judge Modern." *House Beautiful* 86 (Aug 1944): 49. Robsjohn-Gibbings provided the introduction the Havens House. He had known Harris in California, though did not meet Harris's wife, Jean Murray Bangs until the couple moved to New York in 1943. Bangs and Robsjohn-Gibbings developed a close, lifelong friendship, based in part on their shared interest in American design. Robsjohn-Gibbings (1905-1976), or "Gibby" as he was called, was a British-born architect, furniture designer and interior decorator, who, in the 1940s became one of the most noted designers in New York. Though he relied heavily on Classical forms, Robsjohn-Gibbings was still a modernist, yet was a vocal critic of functionalist modernism. His three notable books

were: *Goodbye, Mr. Chippendale* (1944), *Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art* (1947), and *Homes of the Brave* (1954). The later is a history, illustrated with rather humorous cartoons, of modern American housing.

[17] Zevi, Introduction to Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*: xvi.

[18] For *House Beautiful*'s assessment of the Havens House, see "How to judge Modern," *House Beautiful* 86 (Aug 1944): 48-59.

[19] Bangs (1894-c.1986), a Canadian by birth, was educated in economics at the University of California at Berkeley. She was interested in labor unions, and moved to New York to work in this area. Here, among her circle of intellectual friends, she met and married noted labor leader Abe Plotkin. The couple moved to Los Angeles around 1922, where Plotkin founded the California branch of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). By the time Bangs met Harris in 1931 and married him in 1934, she had been divorced for several years, and was working for the Los Angeles County Welfare Department. For a brief biography of Bangs, see Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*.

[20] Bangs knew both Schindler and Neutra before she met Harris; she may have met them through her first husband, Abe Plotkin, who was also acquainted with Pauline Schindler (who later wrote seeking his aid for Jean Field, a single mother whose children had been taken because of her political beliefs regarding the Korean War). For more on Abe Plotkin, see biographical entry in Abe Plotkin Papers, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles.

[21] Bangs first joined the staff of *House Beautiful* as a food editor after Gordon learned of her interest in the culinary arts. As Bangs collaborated on articles with her friend Robsjohn-Gibbings,

she became more interested in writing about architecture than food. She did, however, continue to contribute to *House Beautiful* in both capacities.

[22] Bangs knew of Maybeck from her student days at the University of California at Berkeley; his designs for Hearst Hall had long impressed her. While Harris was completing the Havens House, the couple lived temporarily in Berkeley, and Bangs spent a great deal of time with Maybeck, who had already retired. For this brief encounter, see Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*. Bangs intended to write a book on Maybeck; though she never completed the work, she collected a great deal of material and wrote several articles that dealt with Maybeck's influence on American architecture. Many of these appeared in *House Beautiful* during the 1950s. Bangs's collection of Maybeck materials remains intact in the Harwell Hamilton Harris Papers, Series P: Jean Harris Papers. Alexander Architectural Archive, The University of Texas at Austin.

[23] Bangs was also instrumental in the collection and creation of the Bernard Maybeck Papers held at the University of California at Berkeley; for contents of this collection, Bangs's research materials, and her unpublished manuscript, see Bernard Maybeck Collection, (ARCH 1956-1), Environmental Design Archives, University of California at Berkeley; and the Jean Harris Papers, Alexander Architectural Archive, The University of Texas at Austin.

[24] Walter Webber, a retired architect in the San Francisco Bay Area who worked as a supervisor for Harris, mentioned Greene and Greene to Bangs in passing. The Greene brothers had long since ceased to practice, but were still living in California. Bangs, with Harris and their architect-friend Henry Eggers of Pasadena (coincidentally, the Pace Setter architect for 1953), sought out both of the brothers. Bangs, Harris, and Eggers were instrumental in saving what was left of their drawings, and had their work extensively photographed by Maynard Parker. For these

photographs, see the Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Research Library, San Marino, California.

[25] Howard Myers, editor of *Architectural Forum* was a long-time friend and supporter of Harris. Myers convinced Bangs to write article on the Greene Brothers, which appeared in *Forum*, 28 Oct 1948, shortly after Myers's death. For Bangs's article, see "Greene and Greene: the American house owes simplicity and clarity to two almost-forgotten brothers who showed us how to build with wood" in *Architectural Forum* 89 (Oct 1948): 80-89. Bangs wrote a similar article, "Prophet without Honor" for *House Beautiful* in May 1950; it was reprinted in 1952 by the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 18 (Jul 1952): 11-16.

[26] Bangs and Harris were instrumental in rescuing the Greene and Greene drawings; with the aid of Henry Eggers (Pace Setter architect for 1953), all of their work was photographed, some by Maynard Parker. For this account, see Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*.

[27] Bangs often authored the text that was published in conjunction with Harris's buildings, mostly under her maiden surname of Bangs rather than her married name of Harris.

[28] Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*: 105.

[29] Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris*:105.

[30] The Council met in Eugene, Oregon.

[31] See Harwell Harris, "A Regional Architectural Expression," *Architectural Record* (Jan 1955): 48.

[32] Harwell Harris, text from Northwest Region AIA held in Eugene, Oregon in August 1954. The essay was published as "A Regional Architectural Expression," *Architectural Record* (Jan 1955): 48. For this speech and published text, see Harris Papers.

[33] Harris, "A Regional Architectural Expression." *Architectural Record* (Jan 1955): 48.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] David Barrow, Jr., had originally intended to attend architecture school Taliesin West, where he had visited in 1948. Harris advised him "not to go because he'd turn into a clone of Frank Lloyd Wright." Barrow, Jr., enrolled in the School of Architecture in 1951 as Harris was beginning his tenure as Dean of the school. Barrow lived with the Harrises in 1953 in California, and later worked for Harris in his Dallas office. Harris designed a home for Barrow's father. Barrow Jr. was instrumental in acquiring the Harris Papers now held at the Alexander Archives at the University of Texas at Austin. For this account, see David Barrow, Jr., Interview by Author, 5 Dec 2005.

[37] Lacey's diary was eventually revised as his Master's thesis; see Neal Terry Lacey, Jr., "A Synthesis of the Architectural Concepts in the Approach to Design of the House Beautiful Pace Setter House for 1955," (Thesis, Master of Architecture. University of Texas, August 1954).

[38] Lacey, "Synthesis," 10.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Ibid., 11-12.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 12.

[43] Recall, for example, Cliff May and the "Station Wagon Way of Life" from *House Beautiful* June 1950.

[44] Lacey, "Synthesis," 16.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] After the Pace Setter for 1955 was on display at the Fair, it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. J. Robert Phillips, Jr. The house was disassemble and moved to a generous double lot at 13030 Stonebrook Circle in Dallas. Harris made a few changes to the house in 1957, but otherwise it remained intact until its demolition in 1995. In 2006, the site remained partially vacant, with a small condominium development on half of the lot.

[48] Lacey, "Synthesis," 15.

[49] Lacey, "Synthesis," 42.

[50] Lacey, "Synthesis," 39.

[51] Joe Maberry was the general contractor and primary builder for the Pace Setter. Maberry was the owner of Maberry Construction Company, at 6033 Berkshire Lane in Dallas; he built luxury homes, and was also partner in the Allan-Maberry Real Estate Company. Maberry also served as the director and secretary of Dallas Home Builders Association, the director of the National Home Builders Association. He was a native of Mineola, Texas, and a veteran of the United States Navy. For more on Maberry and the construction of the Pace Setter, see "Homebuilder Wins Race With Time," *Dallas Times Herald*, Sunday Oct 10, 1954, section 11-6; and "17 Carpenters Built Frame," *Dallas Times Herald*, Sunday Oct 10, 1954. section 11-7.

[52]*Alcade* (Oct 1954): n.p.

[53] Barrow, interview with author, December 2005.

[54] Barrow, interview with author, December 2005.

[55] Vladivostok, a major port city and naval base on the Sea of Japan, is located on a peninsula in southwest region of Russia, near the Chinese and North Korean borders. It lies directly west of Sapporo, Japan.

[56]The elder Ossipoff was sent to Tokyo in 1909; the family traveled to and from Tokyo and Petrograd (St. Petersburg) between 1909 and 1917, and permanently moved to Japan in 1917, fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution. The Ossipoffs remained in Japan through the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), and until the devastating earthquake of 1923. It is likely that, aside from the effects of the earthquake, that the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922 impacted the elder Ossipoff's post, and surely played a part in the family's migration to the United States. For biographical information based on interviews with Ossipoff, see *Oral Histories of 1930s Architects*, Hawaii Society / American Institute of Architectures September 1982 (121-27); and Diane Dericks, "A Study of Characteristics Underlying the Form of a Vladimir Ossipoff House," (Master's Thesis: University of Hawaii, 1982).

[57] Because of the Depression, Ossipoff worked part-time through college and took only a partial course load.

[58] For Ossipoff's arrival in Hawaii and early career, see *Oral Histories of 1930s Architects*: 121.

[59] Ossipoff worked with the noted architect Theo H. Davies until 1935, when he resigned to take a brief job with another established Hawaiian practitioner, William Charles Dickey. For his employment history, see *Oral Histories of 1930s Architects.*

[60] In 1956, Ossipoff partnered with Al Rowland, Sid Snyder, and Greg Goetz. The firm changed name to Ossipoff, Snyder, Rowland and Goetz, Inc in 1973. The firm later became Ossipoff, Snyder and Rowland.

[61] Ossipoff was awarded the first medal of honor of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and received the AIA award in 1959 for his own house and for the McInerny Store in Waikiki. For more on his accomplishments, see Obituary, "Vladimir Ossipoff," *Honlulu Star-Bulletin* Saturday, October 3, 1998.

[62] Harry W. Seckel was a member of the Hawaii Chapter of the AIA, and prepared the text for the 1954 book, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press Honolulu/Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1954).

[63] Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1898 and became a territory in 1900.

[64] Harry W. Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press Honolulu/Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1954): 9.

[65] Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture*:10.

[66] For more on Paul Howard Liljestrand, see "In Memoriam," Mamiya Medical Heritage Center, Special Collections at Hawaii Medical Library.

[67] "*House Beautiful* presents: The 1958 Pace Setter, a house that is very much more than a house." *House Beautiful* 100 (Jul 1958): 39.

[68] "This house proves that theory about how you get the Best Possible House." *House Beautiful* 100 (Jul 1958): 78-79.

[69] For the notion and terminology of movement "spines" and "pivot points" specifically, see Dericks, "A Study of Characteristics."

[70] "This would be a good plan anywhere." *House Beautiful* 100 (Jul 1958):48-49, 99.

**Chapter VIII: "The Natural Progression of Things"**

[1] For the public's appreciation of Wright upon his death, see "Frank Lloyd Wright dies; Famed architect was 89." Special Obituary, *New York Times* 10 April 1959.

[2] In presenting the legacy of Wright upon his death in 1959, *House Beautiful* published a short list of "architects who understand and use Wrightian principles." The list included members of the Taliesin Associated Architects such as William Wesley Peters, John Howe, Allen Davison, Kenneth Lockhart, Eugene Masselink, Aaron Green (the west coast representative in San Francisco), Charles Montooth (the southwest representative in Phoenix), and Stephen Oyakawa (the Hawaiian representative based in Honolulu). This list of Taliesin architects was expected; the list of other architects who have grasped and used Wright's organic principles was more revealing. Some of these were former Taliesin fellows, such as Peter Berndtson, Curtis Besinger, William Deknatel, James DeLong, Alden Dow, and Fay Jones. Others, such as Karl Kamrath (Mackie & Kamrath), Henry Klumb (Puerto Rico), Fred Liebhart (La Jolla), Robert Mosher (La Jolla), and Alfred Browning Parker had absorbed Wright's lessons from afar. *House Beautiful*'s list was only partial; designers tangentially associated with organic architecture such as Harwell Hamilton Harris, John Yeon, Anshen & Allen, Edla Muir, Eldredge Snyder, Albert Ledner, Wahl Snyder, and Josheph Esherick received no mention, though appeared frequently in the magazine. John deKoven Hill later recalled that this was not a purposeful exclusion, but that the Wright issue had been done in haste with material at hand. Regardless of the length of the list, *House Beautiful*'s attempt to establish Wright's continuing influence was significant.

[3] John deKoven Hill, "Interior Space as Architectural Poetry." *House Beautiful* 101 (Oct 1959): 281.

[4] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Essence of Frank Lloyd Wright's Contribution." *House Beautiful* 101 (Oct 1959): 262.

[5] Parker's Pace Setter for 1959 was designed for Graham Miller in Coconut Grove, Florida.

[6] "The inward-turning plan makes a small lot seem big." *House Beautiful* 101 (Feb 1959): 82.

[7] Curtis Besinger, in describing the theme of this house, made an apt cultural reference to the exploration of space: "In the future, when its history is written, the last half of the 20th Century will be known as the age in which new frontiers in space were established. Our newspapers tell us daily of exciting exploits directed toward the frontiers of outer-space. But they say nothing of what can happen and is happening right here where we all live, in *inner-space.*…This Pace Setter house shows you something of the significance and the quiet excitement that can be achieved by a venture into the frontiers of *inner-space*. How appropriate it is now, as we continue to scarify the land and pollute the air of our cities with industrial fumes!" See Curtis Besinger, "Why this house is a Pace Setter," *House Beautiful* 101 (Feb 1959): 74-77, 131.

[8] Ibid., 75.

[9] Elizabeth Gordon, "Exploding the Box to Gain Spaciousness." *House Beautiful* 101 (Oct 1959): 256.

[10] Ibid., 258.

[11] For this notion, see Bruno Zevi, *Towards an Organic Architecture* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1950).

[12] Curtis Besinger, "Why this house is a Pace Setter." *House Beautiful* 101 (Feb 1959): 131.

[13] "The Stature of a Genius." *House Beautiful* 101 (Oct 1959): 272.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Gordon, "Exploding the Box to Gain Spaciousness." *House Beautiful* 101 (Oct 1959): 258.

[16] John Hill, Sr. was a journalist, and later worked in advertising sales and publishing for the Curtis Publishing Company. His family came from Manhattan, and his brother Lester Hill was a famed mathematics professor at Yale (and later Hunter College). Hill, Sr. was named after John deKoven, a Chicago banker who had been a friend of his father (and made him a handsome profit in the stock market). Helen, descended from a Bavarian family in the Pennsylvania Dutch farm country, worked as a newspaper editor for the women's pages in Cleveland, and later attempted to launch a career in writing. It was through his mother, who played piano and had formal voice training, that Hill acquired his interest in music. See John deKoven Hill and Maggie Valentine, *John deKoven Hill*, (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles : State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997).

[17] Gillette was an architect in the Toledo firm of Mills, Rhines, Bellman, Nordhoff, Lee and Gillett. For more on his influence on Hill, and Hill's early interest in architecture, see Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill*: 19.

[18] Hill toured the 1933 Exposition on many occasions, often acting as a tour guide for the family's many out of town guests who had come to see the show.

[19] Hill recounted that he phoned Taliesin in the winter of 1937, but the Fellowship had already left Spring Green for their winter stay in Arizona. His father was in Arizona on business later that year, and went to see Wright personally in Scottsdale. The elder Hill was charmed and impressed with Wright and his wife Olgivana, and sensed that the architect's views on architecture, philosophy and spirituality would be good for his son. Much to Wright's liking, the elder Hill agreed to pay tuition for four years, in full. Hill's start date verified by Hill, Sr. to Masselink, 2

Feb 1938; 26 May 1938. For the account of Hill's early interest in Taliesin, see Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill*: 22-23.

[20] Hill began his architectural instruction under Jack Howe by tracing existing drawings and floor plans. He then advanced to designing under Howe's guidance, and finally to drafting entire layouts, which Howe or Peters could later amend. A great deal of his training came directly from watching Wright work. Hill recalled that Wright would begin a concept, or a sketch of a plan or elevation, and then hand it off to one of his apprentices, usually Howe and later Hill, to "straighten" it up and interpret the final form. This made attribution difficult, though Dick Carney believed he could tell who had supervised and worked on Wright's project – he felt there was a clear distinction between Wright's "intention" and the apprentice's "drawing." Hill was particularly interested in developing interior volumes and their uses, including furniture arrangement. See Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill:* 144-45.

[21] Cornelia Brierly was among Hill's closest friends from the time he came to Taliesin until his death. Brierly attended Carnegie Institute of Technology, and by the time she joined Taliesin was "in the direction of being an architect." For more on Brierly, see Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill:* 103.

[22] For Hill's resume, including his various responsibilities at Taliesin, see "JOHN DEKOVEN HILL." Hill Papers, Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.

[23] For Hill's discussion of Wright's encouragement of his interior design talent, see "Johnny Hill," The Frank Lloyd Wright Archives Oral History Program. Interview 3/26/92. Audio interview by Jane Margolies, for *House Beautiful*, March 26, 1992. Place: Taliesin West Sun Cottage Guest Cottages. 33 pages. Transcribed by Indira Berndtson, Jan 27, 1993 (10).

[24] Hill was involved with design, construction and interior decoration of sixty-nine completed Wright projects, and the interior design of at least twenty houses. Hill also worked on architectural models, including the Guggenheim Museum and the Price Tower. For a complete list, see Hill Papers.

[25] For an account of his time in Mexico, see Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill*: 98.

[26] The official position seemed to be that Fitch resigned to spend a year writing in Italy; Fitch has elsewhere recounted that he "resigned from the editorial board of *House Beautiful* in the spring of 1953. The decisive issue was, of all things, whether the Gropius/Miesian/Bauhaus version of modern architecture was "communistic," hence somehow un-American, while that of the San Francisco Bay region which the magazine editorially supported was safely "American." I had argued for months against such an absurd posture, but realizing that the magazine, as the high-style end of the Hearst empire would inevitably be drawn into the red-baiting frenzy, I decided that I had no choice but to resign in protest." For this account, and a brief biography of Fitch, see "James Marston Fitch," in *Brief Biography of James Marston Fitch*, The James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation. For Gordon's request for a replacement, see Gordon to Wright, Western Union Telegram 21 May 1953. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

[27] Hill later described his interview with Gordon in her Dobbs Ferry Home, and the first trial assignment she assigned to him. His initial reaction was that he was terribly inexperienced and might not be able to "deliver the goods." He also mentioned that Gordon was "cagy" and many on the staff seemed intimidated or afraid of her. Hill never was. For more on his reactions, see various correspondences between Hill and his parents, particularly Hill to "Mother and Dad," June 15, 1953, Hill Papers.

[28] Gordon to Wright, 9 July 1953, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

[29] See "Johnny Hill," The Frank Lloyd Wright Archives Oral History Program: 10.

[30] Hill often used Minnick Display and the John Scalia cabinet shop in Manhattan; both built custom furniture and settings for *House Beautiful*'s photo shoots and exhibitions. Until the Pace Setter 1960 project, Hill's largest endeavor and his "opus" was *House Beautiful*'s Arts of Daily Living Exhibition for the Los Angeles County Fair in 1954. Hill designed this twenty-two room exhibit almost single-handedly, though with contributions from Alfred Browning Parker, and the Hawaiian architect Albert Ely. The exhibit was meant to illustrate good design in common environments, but essentially showcased *House Beautiful*'s concept of organic architecture. It was dedicated to Wright. For more on the fair, see *House Beautiful* 1954; and Hill and Valentine, *John deKoven Hill:* 390.

[31] Joël was a concatenation of the first two letters of the partners' first names: "Jo" for John deKoven Hill and "el" for Elizabeth Gordon. For the formation of Joël, see John D. Hill to Rosie T, May 14, 1956, Hill Papers.

[32] With the encouragement of his Taliesin colleagues, William Wesley Peters and Eugene Masselink, Hill stayed on at *House Beautiful* for three more years. Masselink's death in 1962 finally convinced Hill to return to Taliesin to "help" Mrs. Wright. The Hearst Corporation wanted Hill to stay through October 1963 to fulfill his contract, and in the meantime enticed him to stay by doubling his salary. His contribution to the magazine was considerable, and did not go unnoticed, see for example Richard Deems to Hill, 21 Sept 1962, Hill Papers. Deems wrote, "John, I wonder if you realize how much of an influence you have been these last several years on the culture of this country. You have a rare combination of qualities, and you and Elizabeth

[Gordon] have had a vehicle with which to educate literally millions, for the influence of *House Beautiful* goes so far beyond its one million circulation." For Hill's account of his resignation, see "Johnny Hill." The Frank Lloyd Wright Archives Oral History Program.

[33] To have a potential client approach the magazine for a commission was a bit unusual. Before Hill's arrival at *House Beautiful* in 1953, Gordon was solely responsible for choosing the Pace Setter architects and projects. After Hill arrived, Gordon and he made subsequent decisions together. The Pace Setter architect was often someone they knew, and in many instances (such as with Cliff May), designers approached *House Beautiful* about possible opportunities. Scouts on the west coast, including photographer Maynard Parker, were instrumental in bringing new talent to the attention of the editors. Nevertheless, Hill mentioned Corbett's proposal to his parents in a letter dated 29 Sept 1957. Hill Papers.

[34] J. Ralph Corbett (1897-1988) was a successful businessman and philanthropist. He had been a judge in the juvenile court system in Long Island, and later entered the sales business. By 1936, he moved to Cincinnati and founded NuTone, a company that produced one of the first musical electronic door chimes, and went on to make intercoms, garage door openers, vacuums, and other consumer household electronics. Corbett sold his interest in NuTone in 1967, to devote his time to running the Corbett Foundation, which supported the performing arts and medical research. The Corbetts funded the University of Cincinnati's music school and the Corbett Auditorium, constructed in 1967. The also financed the Patricia Corbett Pavilion for the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, which housed both opera and ballet facilities. Corbett was also chairman of the Ohio Arts Council. For Corbett's biography, see "J. Ralph Corbett, 91; Executive Aided Arts," *New York Times Obituary*, 5 October 1988.

[35] Stewart Maxwell, a lifelong neighbor of the Corbetts on Grandin Road in Cincinnati, attested that although they were active in opera and symphony society and were great patrons of Cincinnati, the Corbetts were never really considered part of the town's "Old Guard" high society. Stewart Maxwell to author, 6 June 2007.

[36] Alcoa provided the aluminum roof; for their sponsorship, see various advertisements in *House Beautiful* February 1960.

[37] For the concept of the Pace Setter as a union of craft efforts and a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, see "Invitation to view the 1960 Pace Setter – The House as a Work of Art," *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960): 89.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Shelter that Encloses without confining." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960): 124.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Hill designed eighty-four different fabrics and five wallpapers specifically for the Pace Setter.

[42] Hill designed the pattern and color-scheme for the kitchen counters; these were made by the Cincinnati-based Formica Corporation and available for order in 1960.

[43] Elizabeth Gordon, "Shibui Brought Up to Date." 17 September 1962. Elizabeth Gordon Papers 1958-1987, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[44] Elizabeth Gordon, "What is Shibui," 17 September 1962. Gordon Papers.

[45] Ibid.

[46] See *House Beautiful* August 1960 and September 1960.

[47] Elizabeth Gordon, "Resume." Gordon Papers.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Gordon and her staff made the first *shibui* research trip in the spring of 1958.

[50] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Summing up of SHIBU," Staff Memo, *House Beautiful*, n.d. Gordon Papers.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Gordon to Hill, Hear, Henle, et al, 13 December 1959, from the Imperial Hotel. Gordon Papers.

[53] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Summing up of SHIBU," Staff Memo, *House Beautiful*, n.d.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Elizabeth Gordon, "What is Shibui." Gordon Papers.

[56] Gordon to Hill, Hear, Henle, et al, 13 December 1959, from the Imperial Hotel. Gordon Papers.

[57] Elizabeth Gordon, "What is Shibui." Gordon Papers.

[58] Gordon preserved scores of reader's mail, from her subscribers, colleagues, and others in the design profession. For the collection, see the Gordon Papers.

[59] Gordon gathered all of the exhibition materials personally from Japanese markets; the exhibition displays were arranged by the *House Beautiful* staff, primarily Hill. Elizabeth Gordon, "What is Shibui." For text and accompanying lantern slides, see Gordon Papers.

[60] The *Shibui* exhibition opened in Philadelphia in 1961, traveled to the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in the winter of 1962, to the San Francisco Art Museum in May, and to the Newark Public Library, and the Honolulu Academy of Art. For an account of the traveling exhibition, see Gordon Papers.

[61] Roger Rasbach, *The Provident Home* (Houston: Provident Press, 1993): 110. This trip was likely in the spring of 1958, as Gordon indicated in her *shibui* exhibition files, Gordon Papers.

[62] For brief biographical anecdotes, see Rasbach, *The Provident Home*: 178-79.

[63] Rasbach's mother's home had no electricity, gas, water, inside plumbing or telephone. They grew their own food, raised dairy animals, and ran an orchard. Each family member was responsible for domestic chores, and the women produced the family's clothing. Entertainment was reading and music (piano). For more on Rasbach's background see Rasbach, *The Provident Home*.

[64] Rasbach father's possessed a great love for nature and the preservation of the environment. The elder Rasbach was adamant in his beliefs: he built his first music studio around a tree to avoid cutting it; and his numerous musical compositions were based on poems inspired by nature, including his most famous composition that set Joyce Kilmer's poem *Trees* to music. From a young age, Rasbach was influenced by his father's reverence for nature.

[65] Rasbach, *The Provident Home*: 184.

[66] Joseph Strauss, a family friend and builder of the Golden Gate Bridge, exerted a tremendous influence on the young man.

[67] For more on Rasbach's ideas, see Rasbach, *The Provident Home*.

[68] See Rasbach, *The Provident Home*.

[69] "*House Beautiful*'s Good Living House in San Antonio." *House Beautiful* 94 (Mar 1952): 84.

[70] Hupp Motor Cars (after 1946, the Hupp Corporation) of Detroit and Cleveland, an independent automaker, was famous for manufacturing the Huppmobile between 1908 and 1940. After 1946, Hupp shifted its production to auto parts and appliances, including freezers, air conditioning and heating systems (the largest percentage of their products), and soft drink dispensers. See the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*: "Hupp Corporation."

[71] Rasbach, *The Provident Home*:243.

[72] Ibid., 10.

[73] Ibid., 45.

[74] *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control program was launched in October 1949 and ran through January 1951; articles were re-printed by the AIA in 1949. *House Beautiful* was perhaps the first magazine to publish on the subject. In other venues, *Forum* ran articles through the 1950s for the professional audience, and Victor Olgyay's 1963 book *Design with Climate* reflected the importance of a problem that had yet to be solved. Rasbach had a great deal in common with ideas presented as part of *House Beautiful*'s Climate Control program.

[75] Curtis Besinger, "Why this house is a Pace Setter." *House Beautiful* 103 (Sept 1961): 108.

[76] Ibid., 109.

[77] Ibid.

[78] "The 1961 Pace Setter has its roots in the Southwest." *House Beautiful* 103 (Sept 1961): 83.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] "A house rooted in its region." *House Beautiful* 103 (Sept 1961): 87.

[82] Ibid., 88.

[83] This is not to say that Parker only knew how to build in Florida; he also completed designs for Vermont, California, and the Bahamas. He was, regardless of location, particularly concerned with meeting the demands of the micro- and macroclimates.

[84] Alfred Browning Parker, *You and Architecture: A Practical Guide to the Best in Building* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1965).

[85] Parker, "Philosophy." *Florida Architect* (May 1967):n.p.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 30-31; 66.

[88] Parker, *You and Architecture*: 164.

[89] Alfred Browning Parker, "The Making of the Pace Setter." *House Beautiful* 107 (May 1965): 157.

[90] Ibid.,158.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 225.

[93] Ibid.

**Chapter IX: "What is American about American Architecture?"**

[1] Diana J. Sims, "Beyond House Beautiful," *Hagerstown*, no title. Thursday, 3 Sept 1987. From MS 241.A.3.133, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection Dept. of Special Collections, University of Kansas).

[2] John deKoven Hill suggested that Gordon was forced out by the Hearst administration. For this assessment, see John deKoven Hill and Maggie Valentine, *John deKoven Hill* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles : State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997).

[3] Parker and Colean sent the first application in February 1964, but it was rejected with the claim that it was "late." They made a second submission in June 1964 to be considered in 1965, and Robert Levison, director of the Florida region, wrote Parker in January 1965 to inform him that

the AIA Board "did not favor Elizabeth Gordon as an Honorary Member." Parker and Colean submitted another application in February 1965, and Gordon was again rejected. For this chronology, see Elizabeth Gordon file, AIA Archives.

[4] Alfred Browning Parker to Maria Murray, Awards Program AIA. 1 May 1986. MS 241.A.3.137-39, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection).

[5] Charles H. Kahn to Jury for Honorary Members, 18 August 1986. MS 241.A.3.137-39, Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Curtis Besinger, letter to The Design Committee, A.I.A. n.d., but ca. June 1986. Correspondence: Elizabeth Gordon (Besinger Collection).


Fig. 1.1 Pace Setter Houses: (clockwise) Emil Schmidlin, 1949; Roger Rasbach, 1961; Vladimir Ossipoff, 1958.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

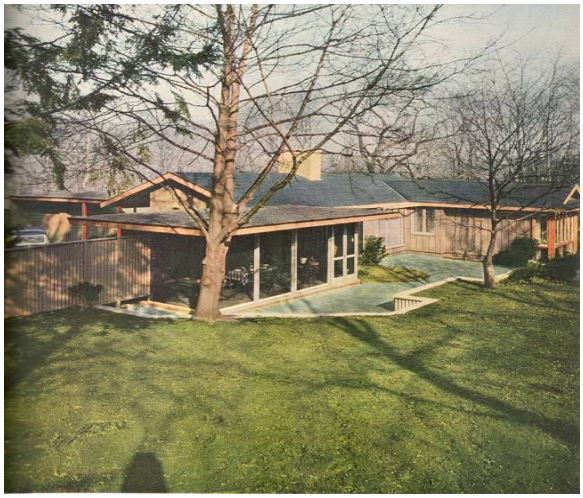

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Fig. 1.2  Pace Setter Houses: (clockwise) Henry Eggers, 1953; Julius Gregory, 1951; John deKoven Hill, 1963.
Source: *House Beautiful*

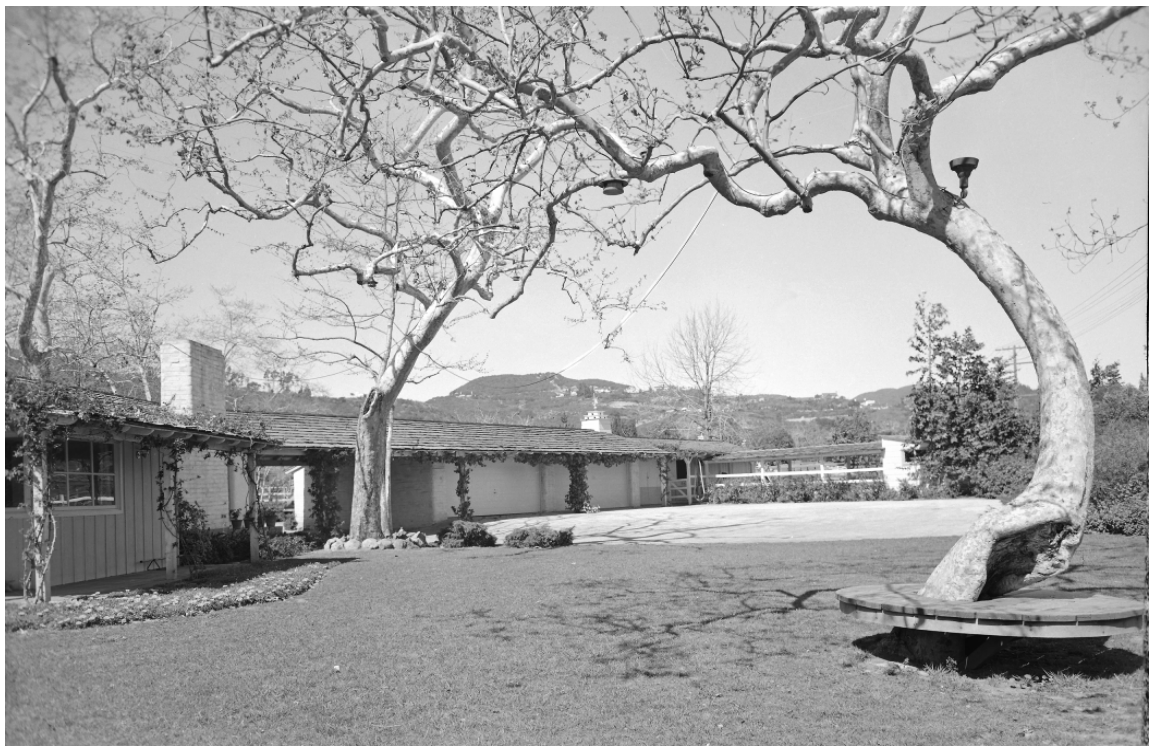

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Fig. 1.3  Pace Setter Houses: (top) Cliff May, 1946; (bottom) Alfred Browning Parker, 1954.
Source: (top) Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library; Ezra Stoller Archives; (bottom) Ezra Stoller Archives.

Fig. 1.4  Elizabeth Gordon, ca 1953.
Source: *House Beautiful*

Fig. 2.1  Elizabeth Gordon, ca. 1962.
Source: *The Dallas News*14 January 1962.

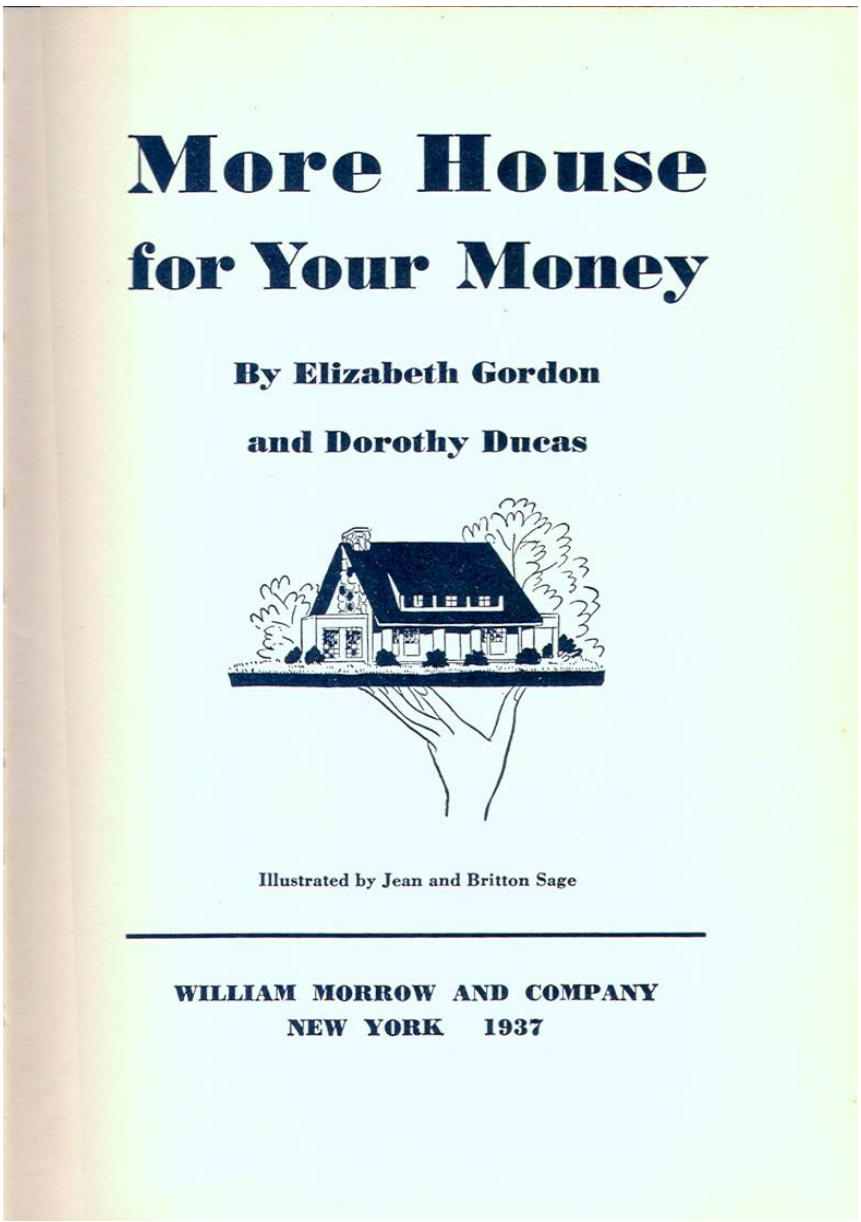


Fig. 2.2 Elizabeth Gordon and Dorothy Ducas, *More House for Your Money* (1937)
Source: frontispiece, *More House for Your Money* (1937)

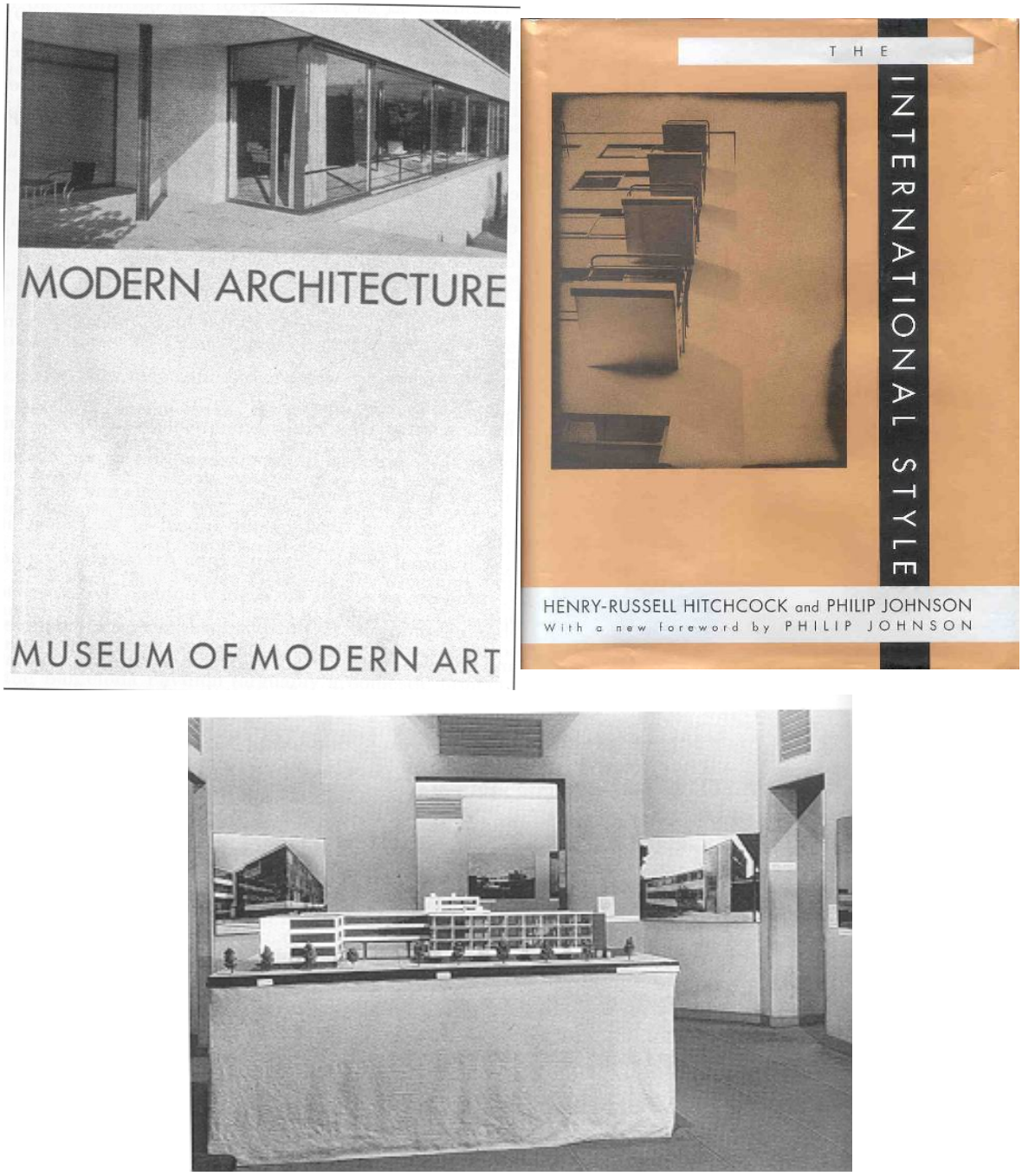


Fig. 2.3 International Style Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932. (clockwise: *Modern Architecture* catalog; Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *International Style*; Exhibition room, 1932.
Source: Terence Riley, *The International Style*


Fig. 2.4  Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, 1928.


Fig. 2.5: "There's going to be a big difference inside."
Source: *Architectural Forum* February 1945


Fig. 2.6 R. Buckminster Fuller, Dymaxion “Wichita House,” 1946.

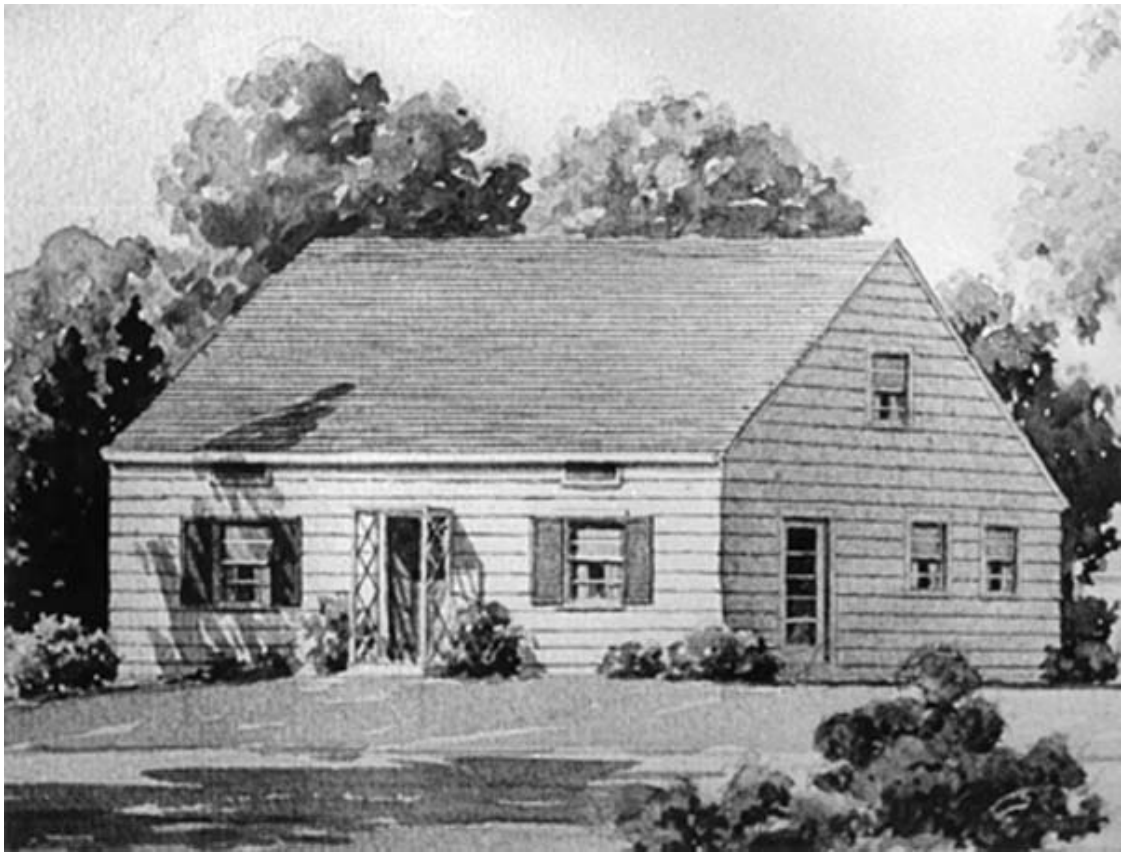

Fig. 2.7  The Cape Cod Cottage, Levittown , New York, 1947.


Fig. 2.8 Mr. and Mrs. America: the postwar client.
Source: *Architectural Forum* 1945

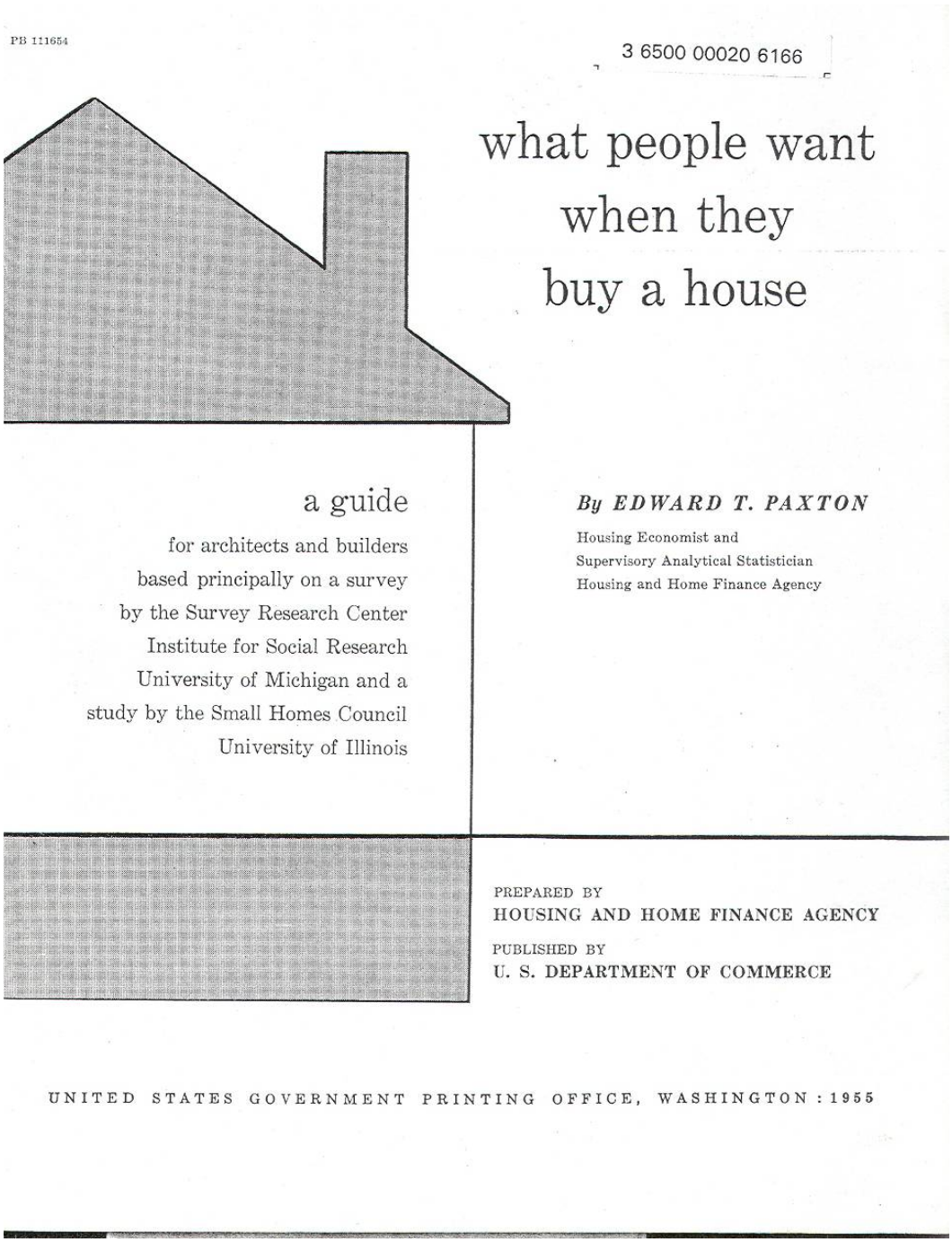


Fig. 2.9 cover, What People Want When They Buy a House
Source: *What People Want When They Buy a House* (1955)

Fig. 2.10  Fritz Burns (right) shakes hands with new residents of his new housing development, Los Angles.
Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection

Fig. 2.11. Marlow-Burns homes at Westchester (top) and Toluca Wood (bottom), Los Angeles.
Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection


Fig.2.12 Fritz Burns, *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943).
Source: *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943).

## • Is it "livable" as well as "lookable"?

NO QUESTION! There's a lot of sales appeal in the very appearance of a brand-new home!

But any prospective owner may be sold on its looks . . . and still have two big questions before he buys.

*How is it built?* Is it scientifically designed, soundly constructed, and made of good materials?

*How will it live?* Is it completely equipped with the best in home appliances? Does it have *all* these aids to *better living?*

- Adequate wiring with plenty of convenient outlets for proper lighting.
- Automatic heating with air conditioning, and automatic hot water.
- An all-electric kitchen with refrigerator, range, dishwasher, garbage Disposall, exhaust fan, and clock. And roomy steel kitchen cabinets.
- An all-electric laundry with washer, dryer, and ironer.

Such a house will combine *better living* with *better appearance* to bring you *faster sales!*

And this home can still be competitively priced.

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This cost actually may be *less* than for an unequipped house, where initial cost must include down payment *plus* the price of separate equipment.

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EVERYTHING ELECTRICAL FOR HOMES AFTER VICTORY

**GENERAL ELECTRIC**

Fig. 2.13 The "livable" and "lookable" house.
Source: *Architectural Forum* 1945

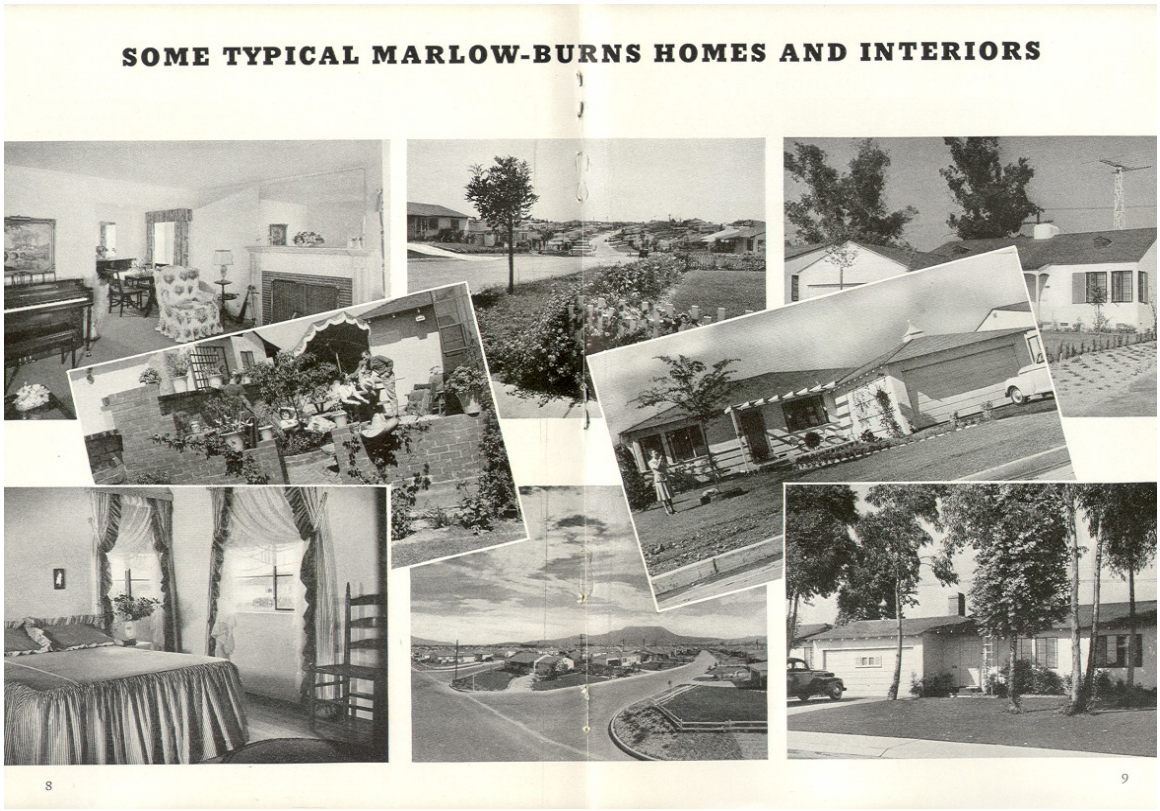


Fig. 2.14 Typical Burns-Marlow Homes, Los Angeles, ca. 1943.
Source: Fritz Burns, *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943).

Fig. 2.15 Burns-Marlow Homes, Los Angeles, ca. 1943.
Source: Fritz Burns, *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943).

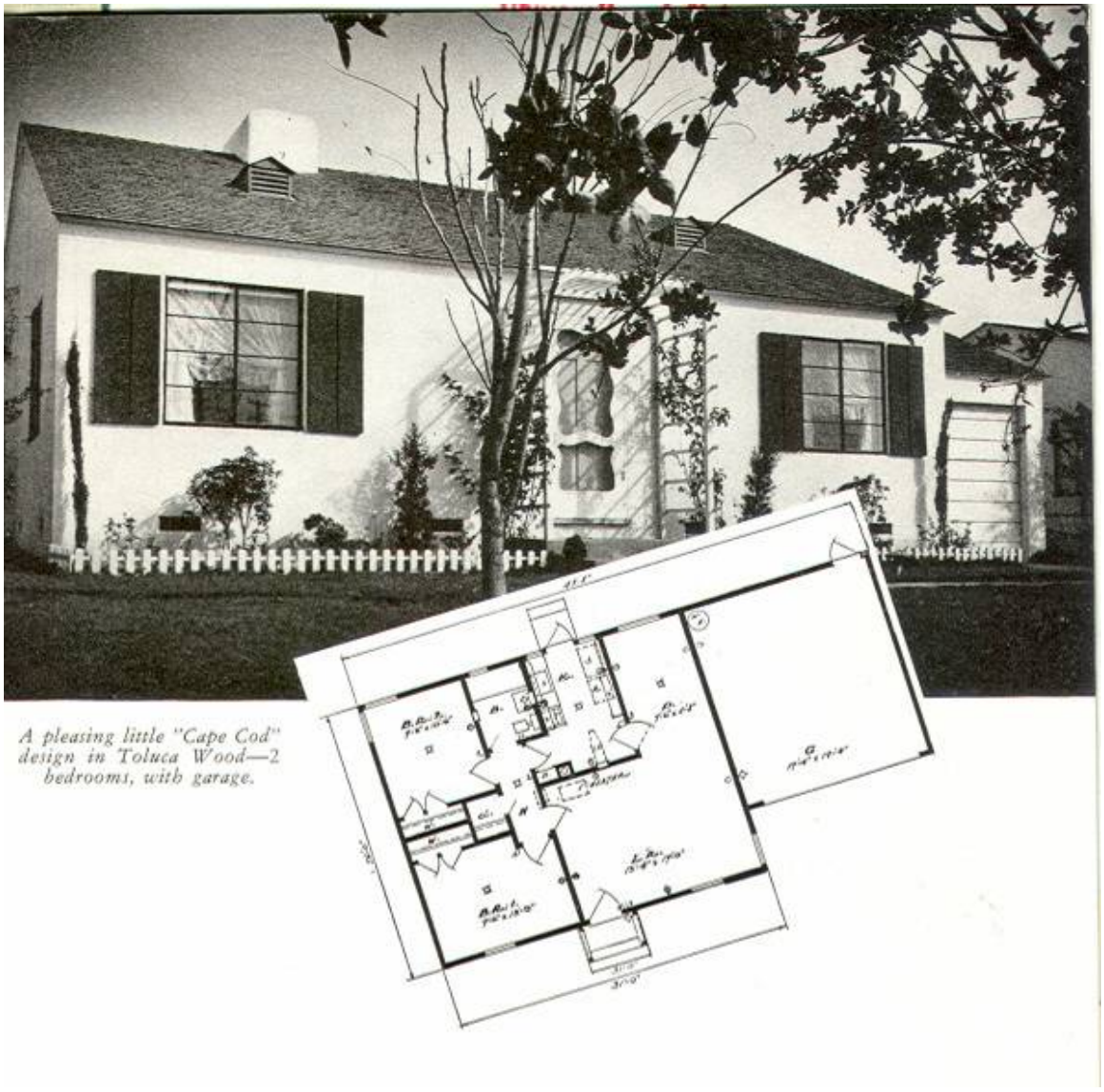


Fig. 2.16 Typical Burns-Marlow Cape Cod and stock floor plan, Los Angeles, ca. 1943.
Source: Fritz Burns, *Livable Homes for Those Who Love Living* (1943).

Fig. 2.17  Typical “California style” house. Cliff May and Chris Choate, Los Angeles, ca. 1948.
Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

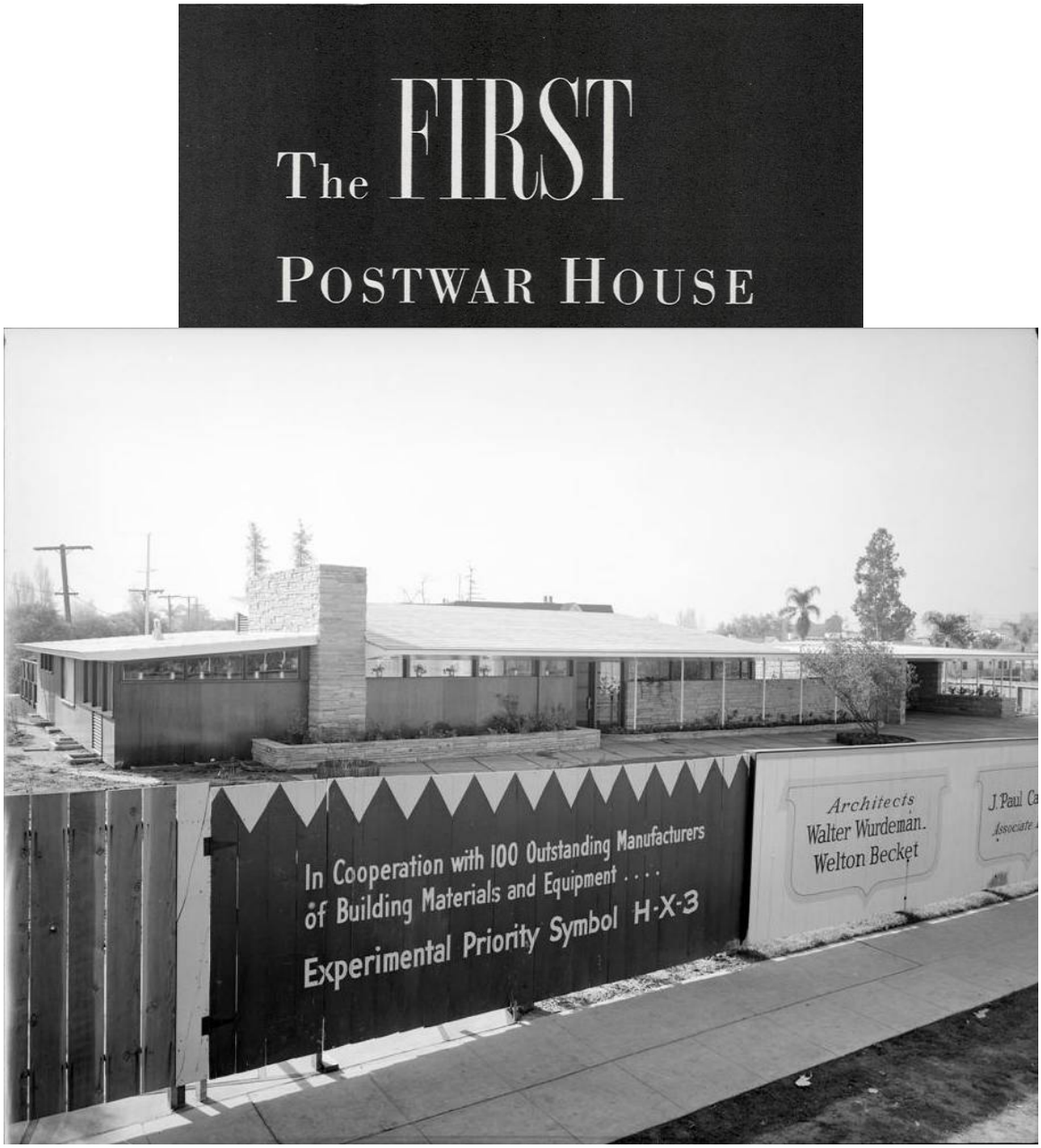


Fig. 2.18 “The First Postwar House” on display, 1946. Sponsored by Fritz Burns; Wurdeman and Becket, architects. Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.19 Waiting in line at The First Postwar House, Los Angeles, 1946. Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection.

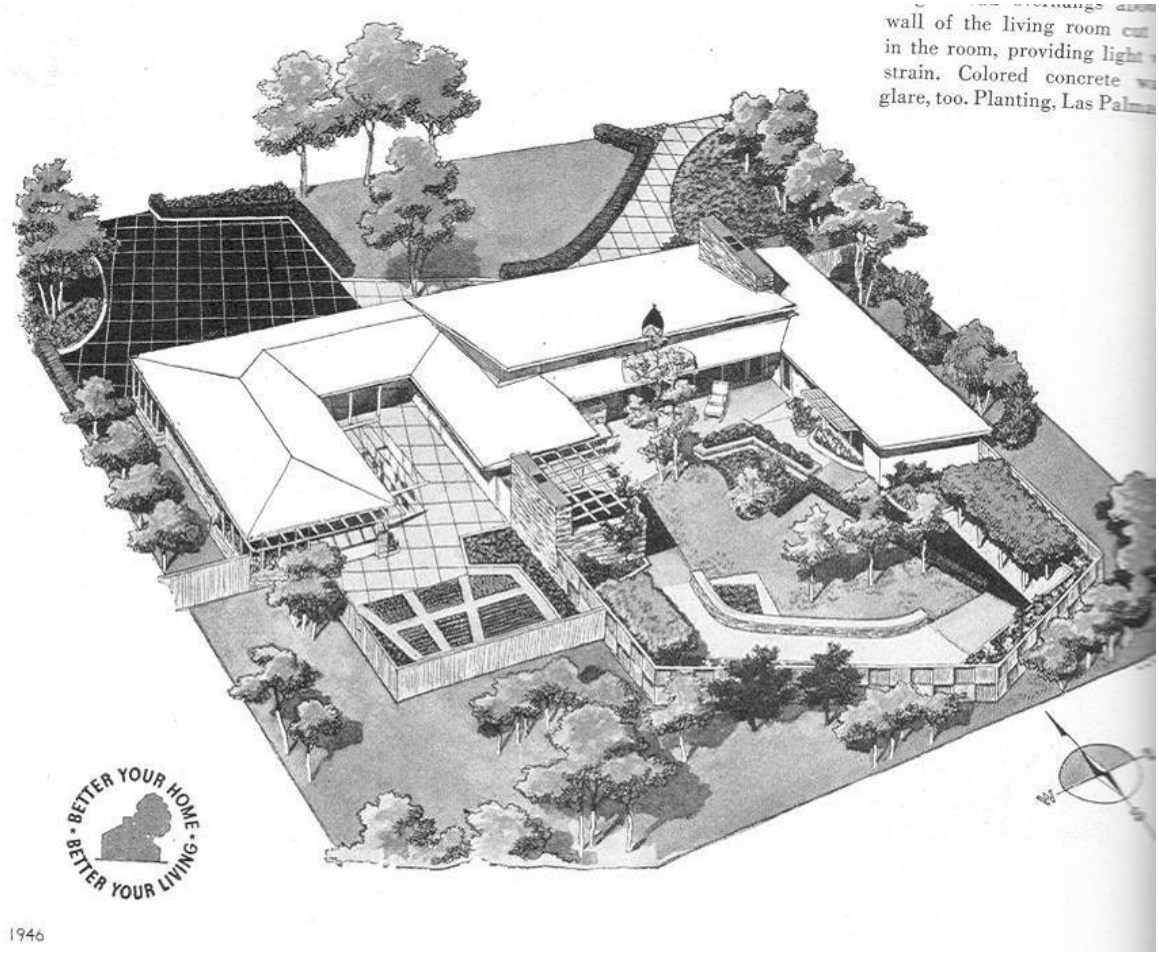


Fig. 2.20 The First Postwar House, aerial drawing, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1946.

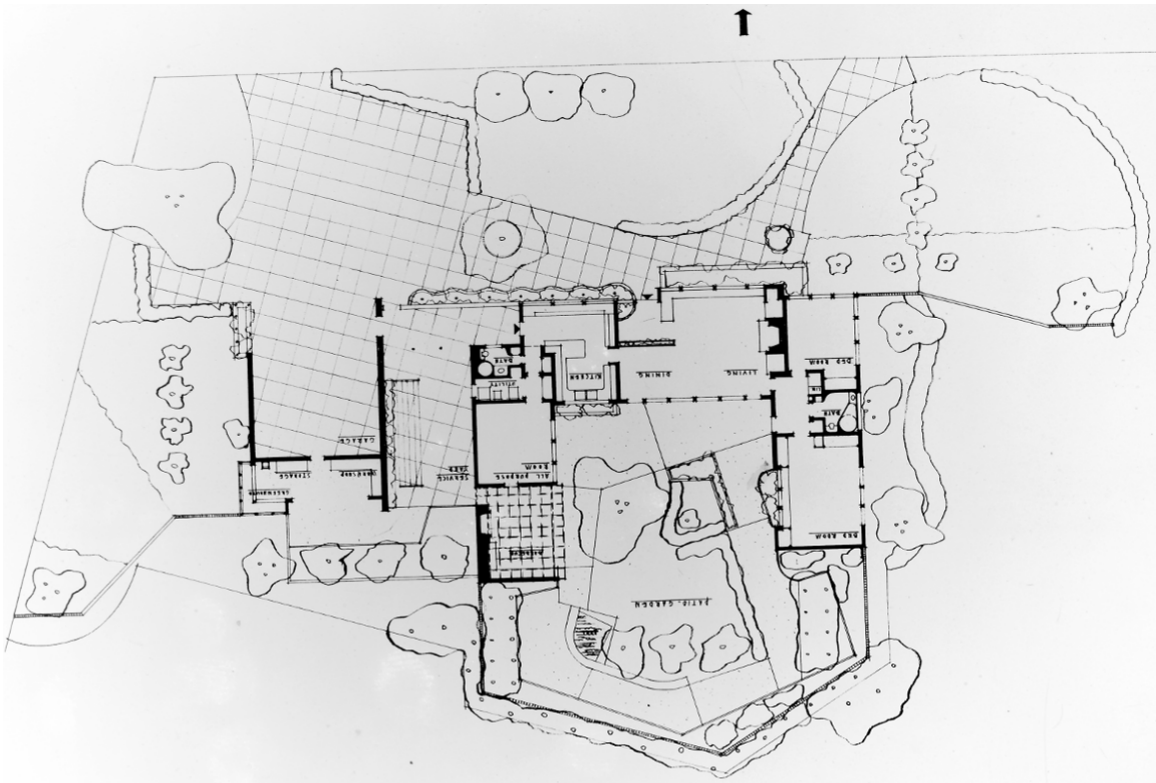

Fig. 2.21 The First Postwar House, plan, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.


Fig.2.22 The First Postwar House, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.23 The First Postwar House, front entry, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.24 The First Postwar House, entry and carport, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.25  The First Postwar House, patio, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.26 The First Postwar House, barbeque terrace, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.27 The First Postwar House, living room, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 2.28 The First Postwar House, kitchen, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection.

Fig. 2.29 The First Postwar House, bathroom, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection.

Fig. 2.30 The First Postwar House, master suite, Los Angeles, 1946.
Source: University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library, Dick Whittington Collection.

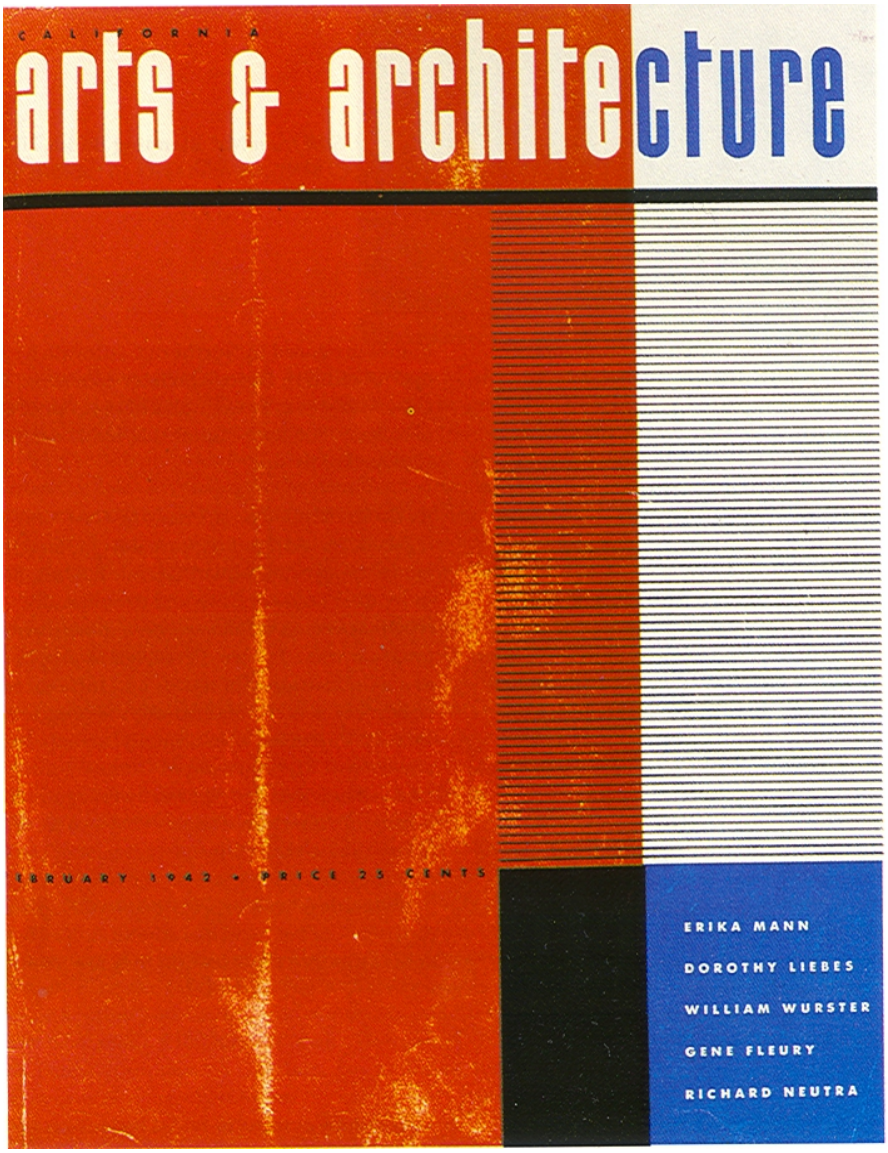


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Fig. 3.1: *Arts & Architecture* January 1943; (bottom): John Entenza (at right) with Charles Eames.
Source: (bottom): Elizabeth A.T. Smith ed., *Blueprints for Modern Living.*


Fig. 3.2 Case Study Houses (clockwise): Pierre Koenig; Pierre Koenig; Charles & Ray Eames. Images by Julius Shulman.

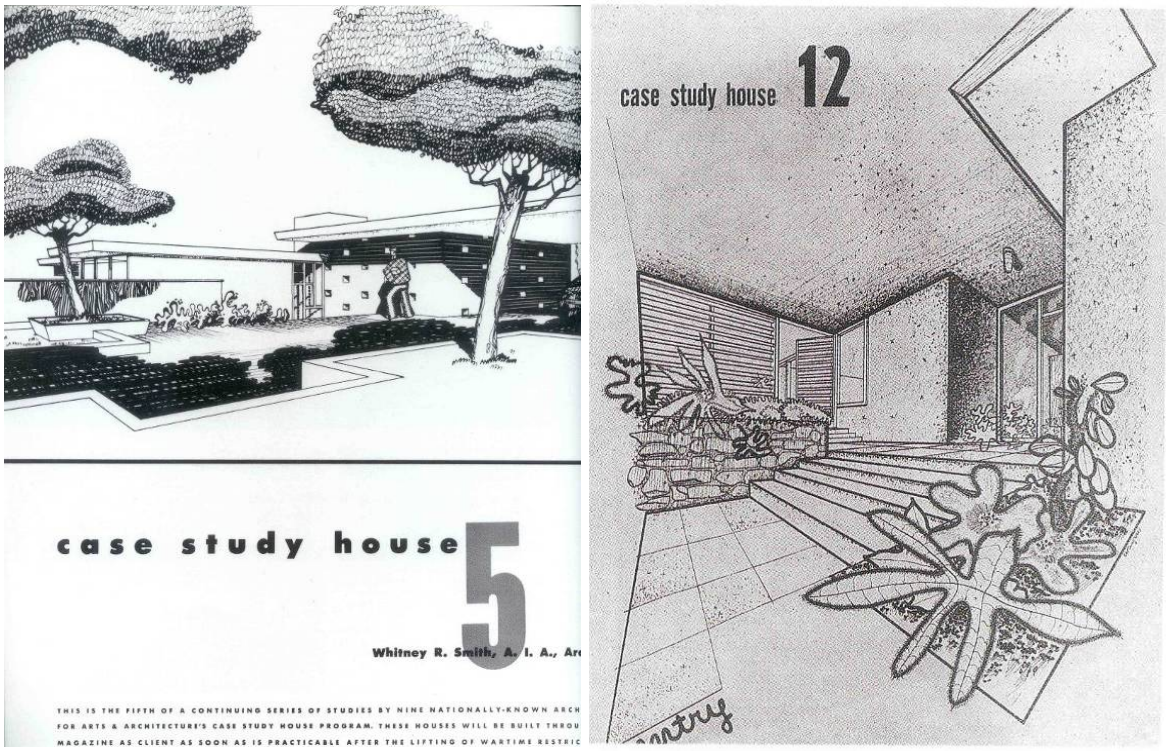


Fig. 3.3 A Selection of Case Study Houses, illustrations from *Arts & Architecture.*

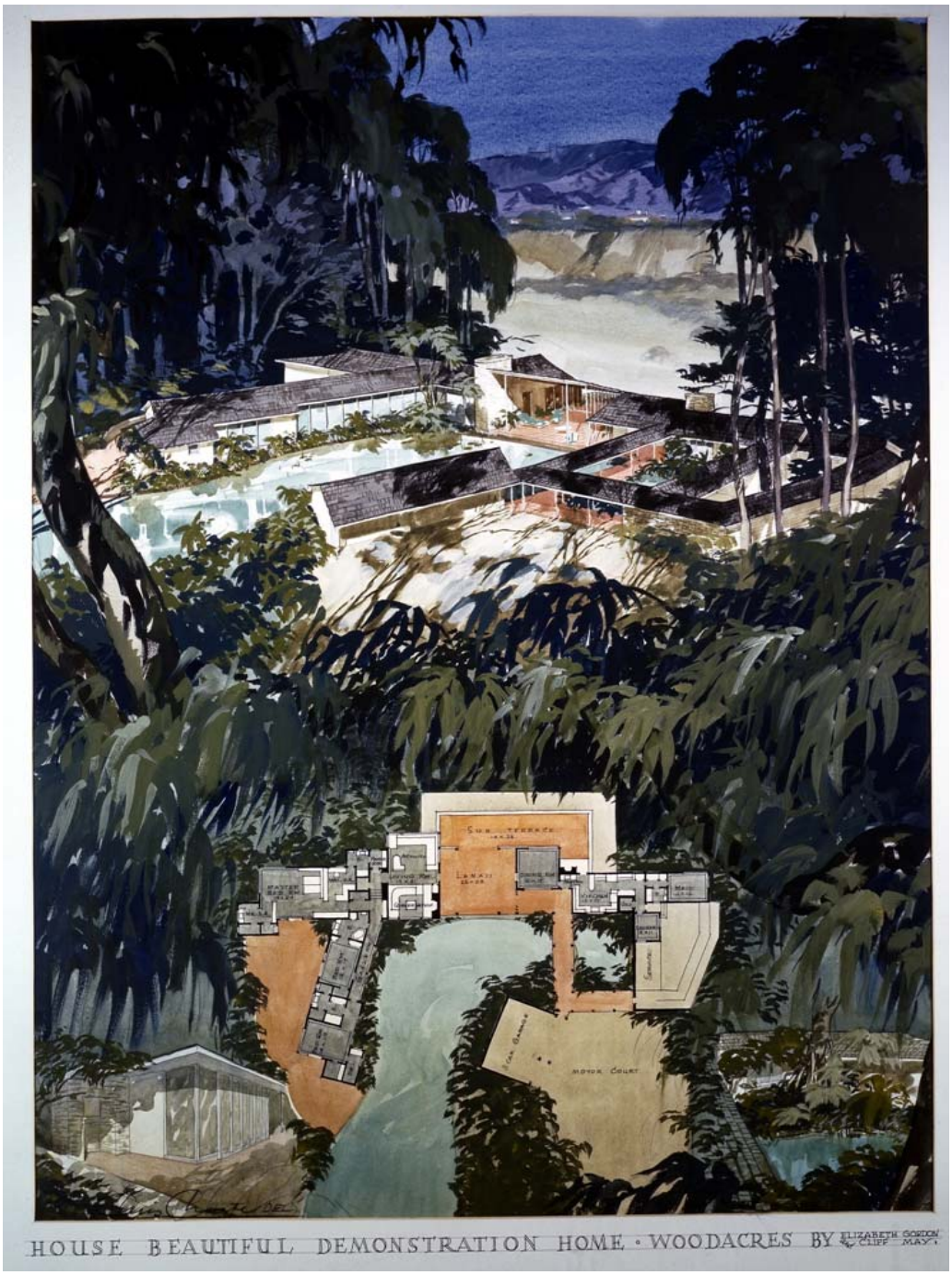


Fig. 3.4 "Woodacres" *House Beautiful* Demonstration House, Cliff May and Elizabeth Gordon, designers.
Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

Fig. 3.5 “Woodacres” *House Beautiful* Demonstration House,
Cliff May and Elizabeth Gordon, designers.
Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

Fig. 3.6 Cliff May with his family, Los Angeles, ca. 1946.
Source *House Beautiful* April 1946.

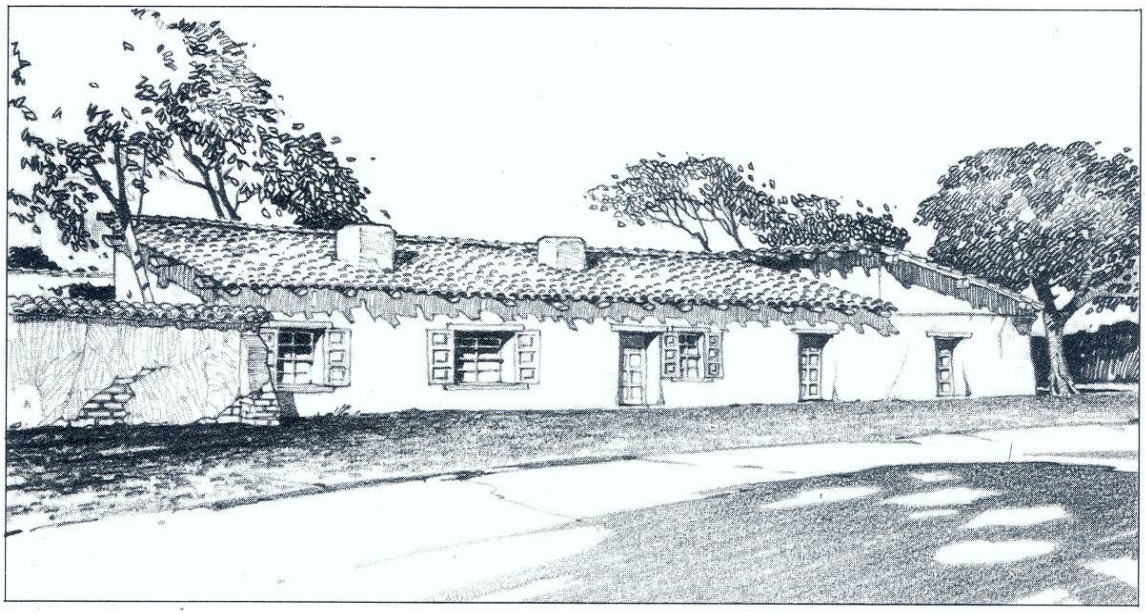

Fig. 3.7 Rancho de Jose Antonio Estudillo (Cliff May relatives), San Diego, ca. 1826. Source: Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses* (1946).

Fig. 3.8 Irving Gill, Dodge House, Los Angeles, 1916.
Source: Society of Architectural Historians Image Database

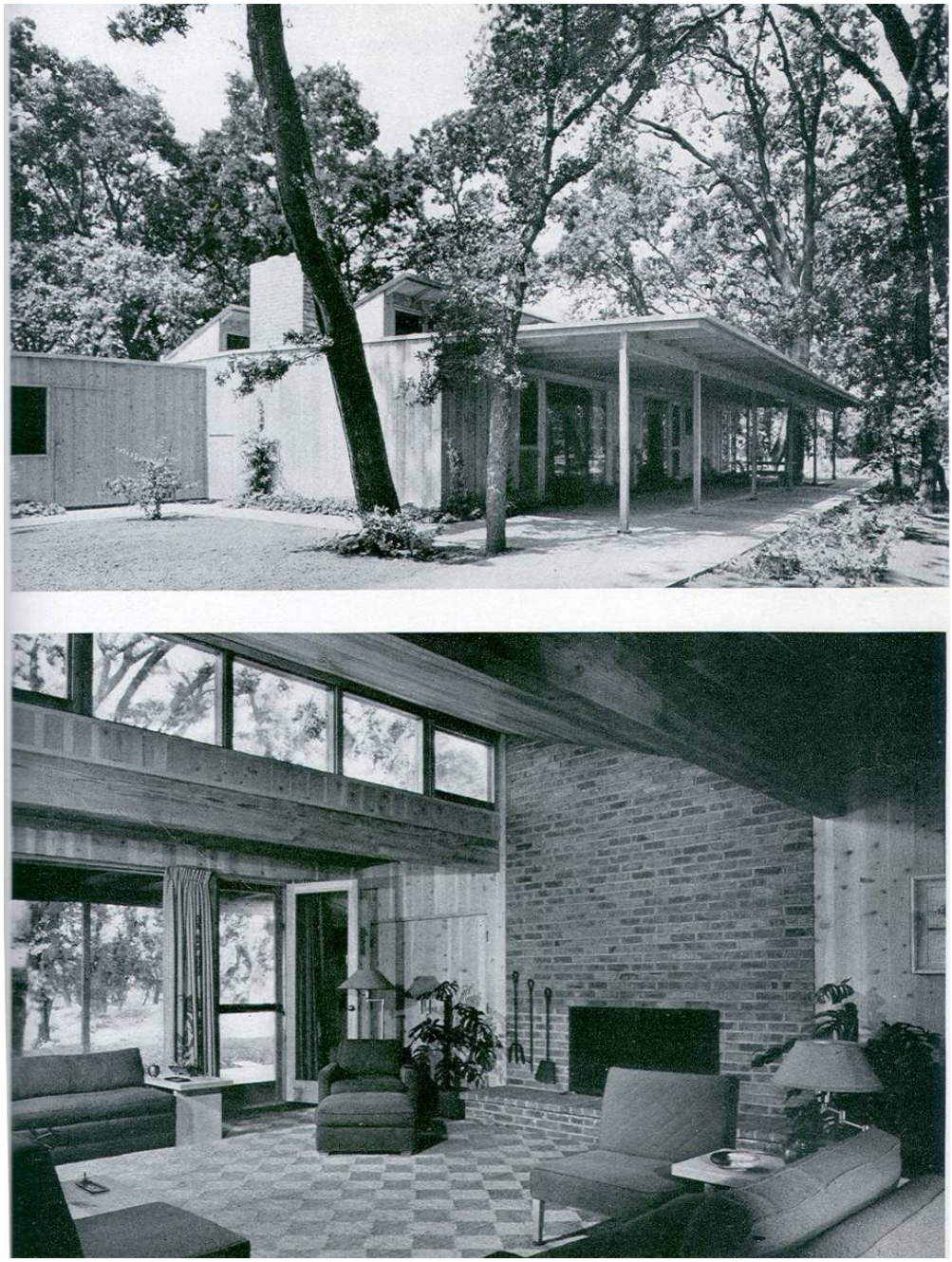

Fig. 3.9 Smith House, Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons, Stockton, California, ca. 1951
Source: Katherine Morrow Ford and Thomas H. Creighton, *The American House Today* (1951).


Fig. 3.10 William Wurster, Gregory Farmhouse, Scotts Valley, California, ca. 1927 (ranch house prototype)
Source: Photo by Roger Sturtevant.

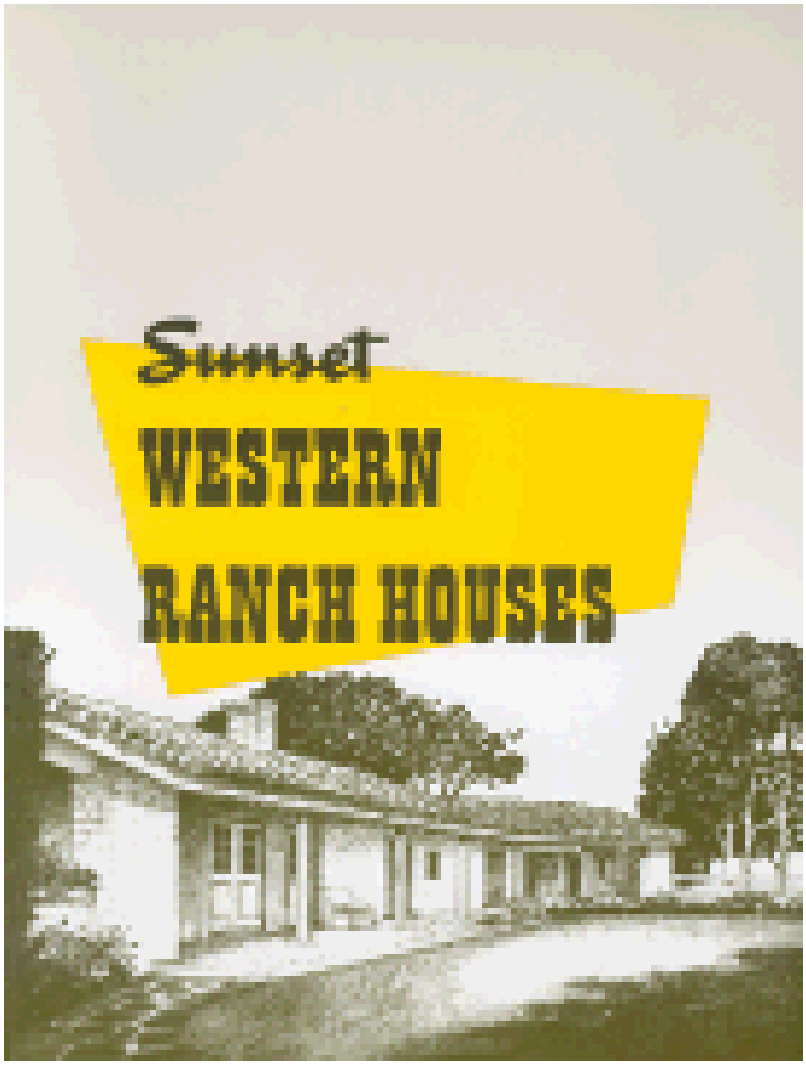


Fig. 3.11 Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses*, 1946 (cover).

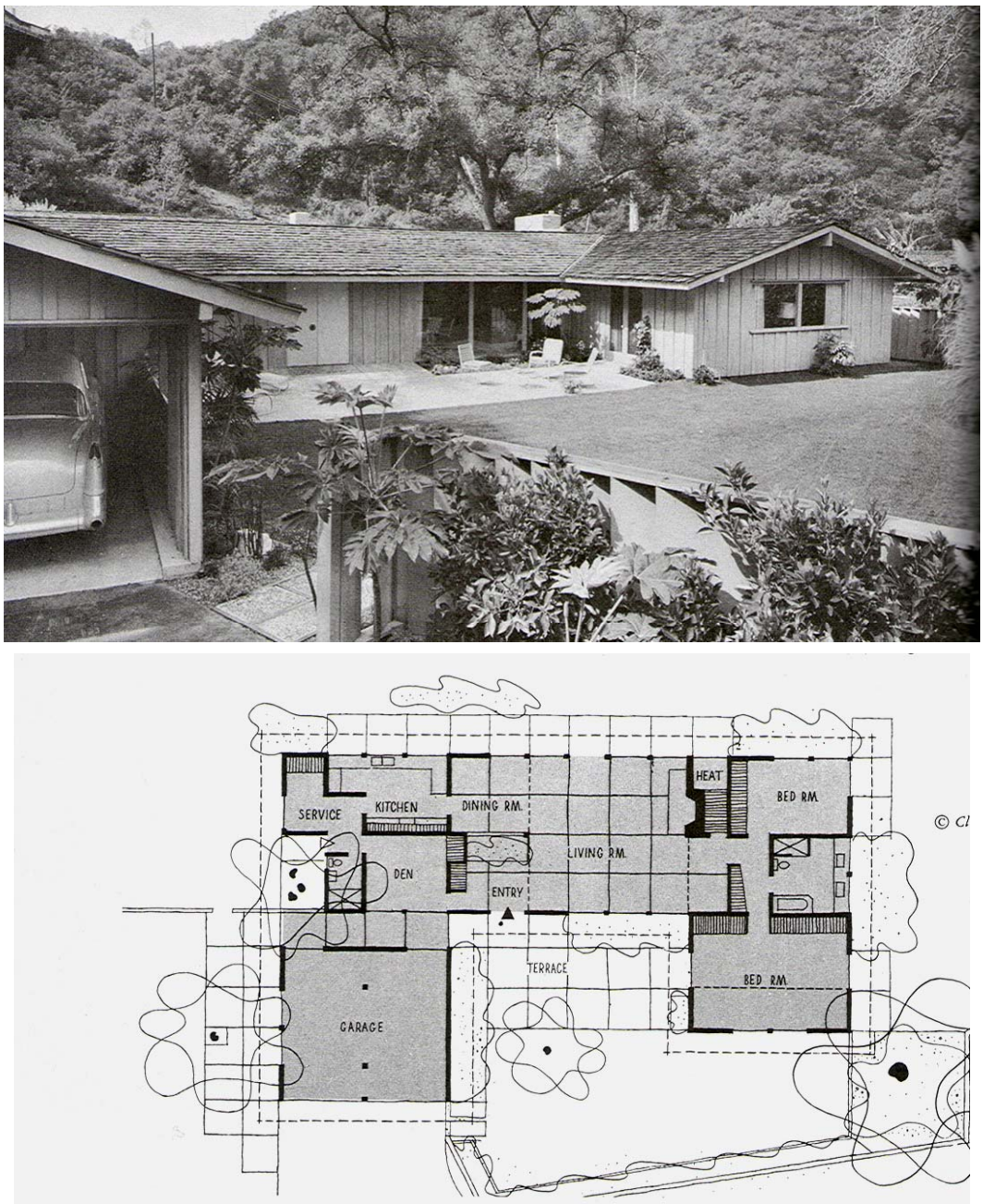


Fig. 3.12 Cliff May, typical California Ranch House, Los Angeles, ca. 1950.
Source: Maynard Parker / Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses* (1958).

Fig. 3.13 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1939
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

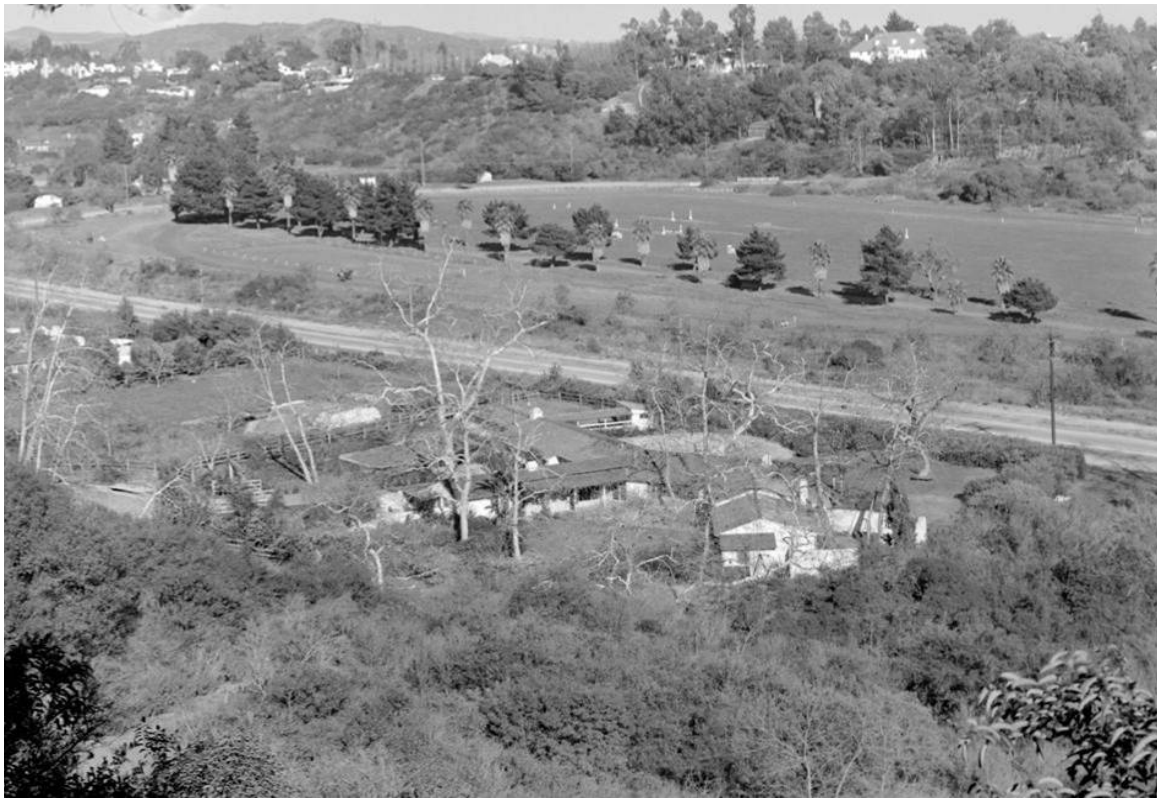

Fig. 3.14 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, Los Angeles, 1939 (Sunset Boulevard to the top of image)
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

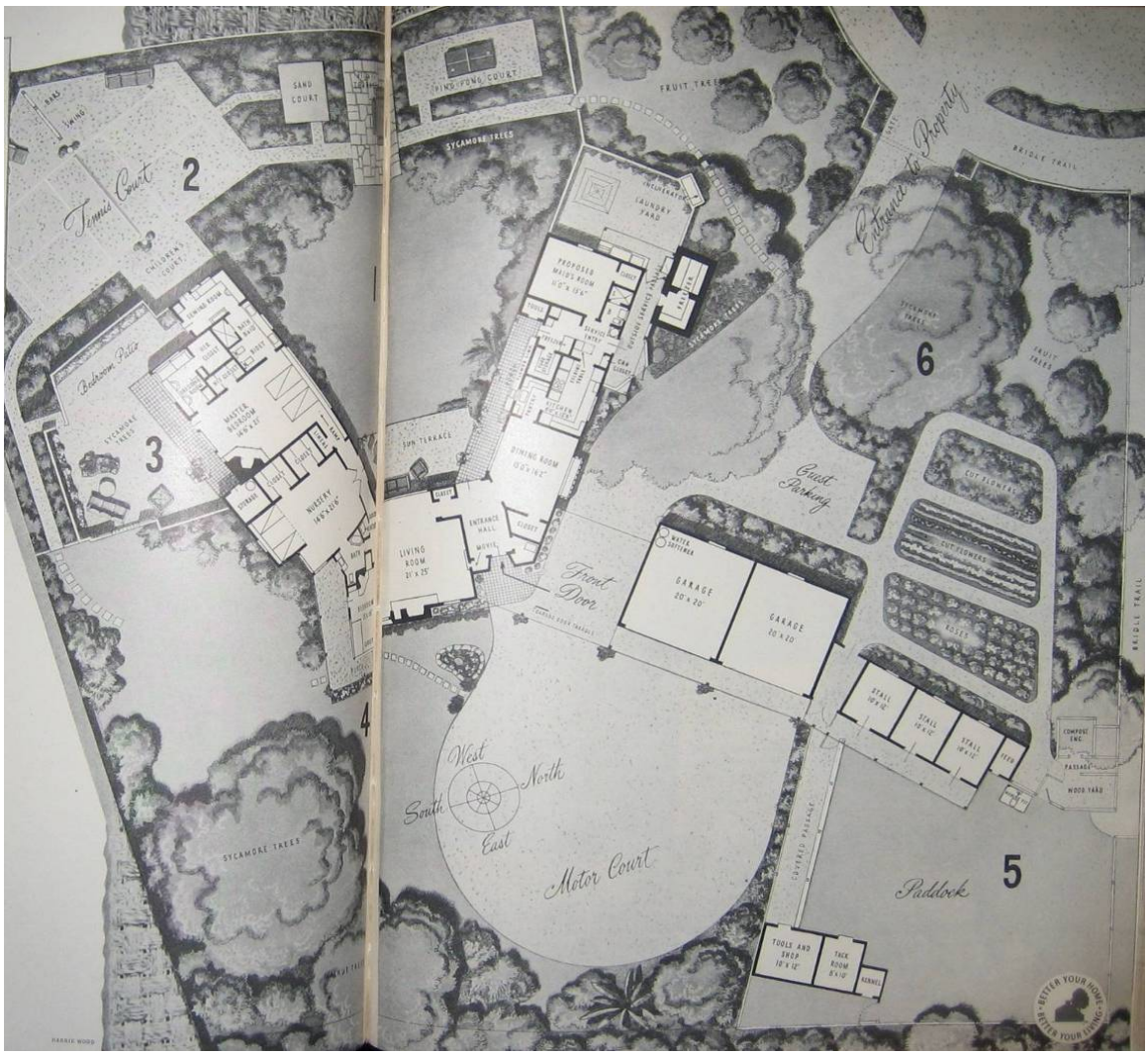


Fig. 3.15 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1939
Source: *House Beautiful* 1946

Fig. 3.16 Cliff May Ranch House Classic patio, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1939
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 3.17 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1939
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 3.18 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, interior. Paul T. Frankl, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1939
Source: Maynard Parker Collection,  The Huntington Library.

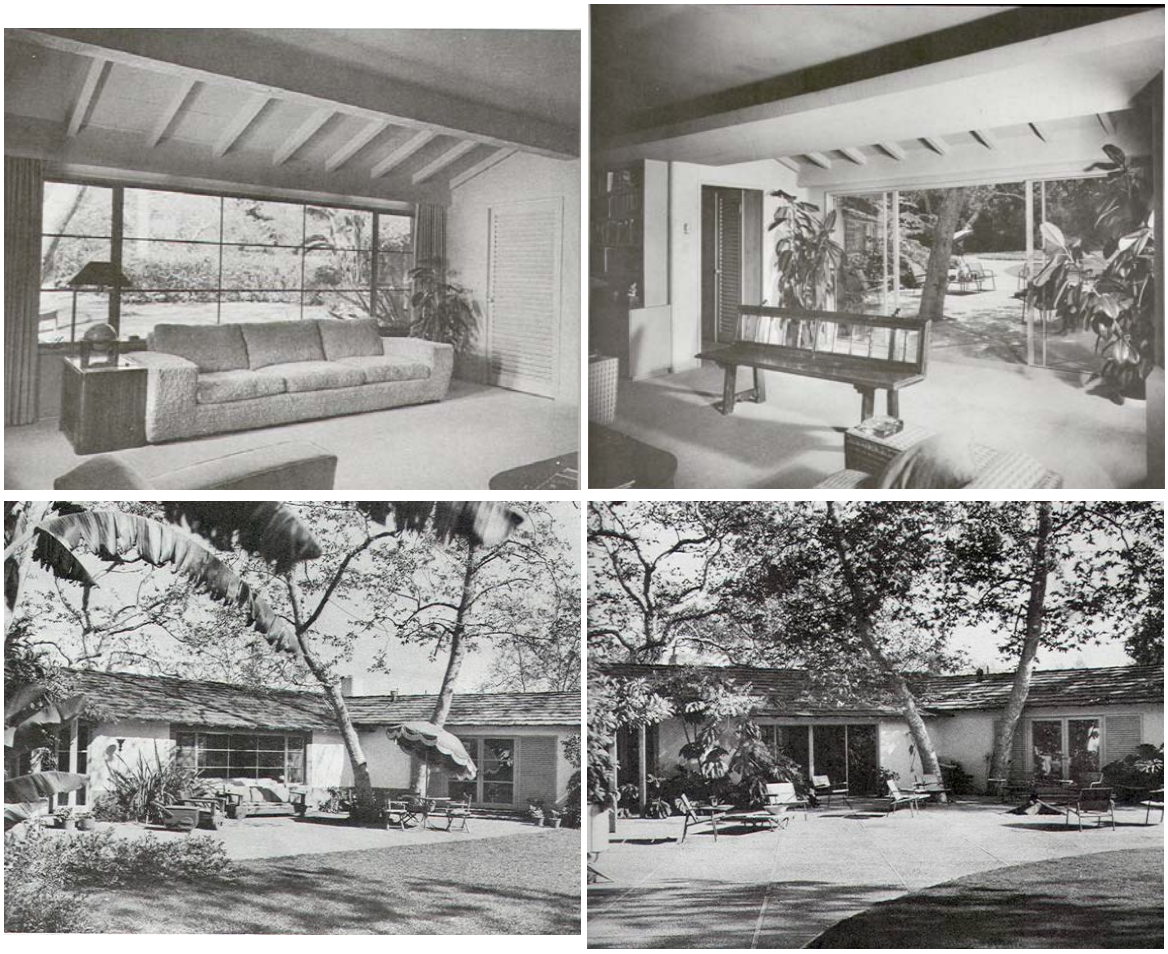

Fig. 3.19 Cliff May Ranch House Classic, before (left, 1939) and after (right, 1949)
Source: Maynard Parker / Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses* (1958).

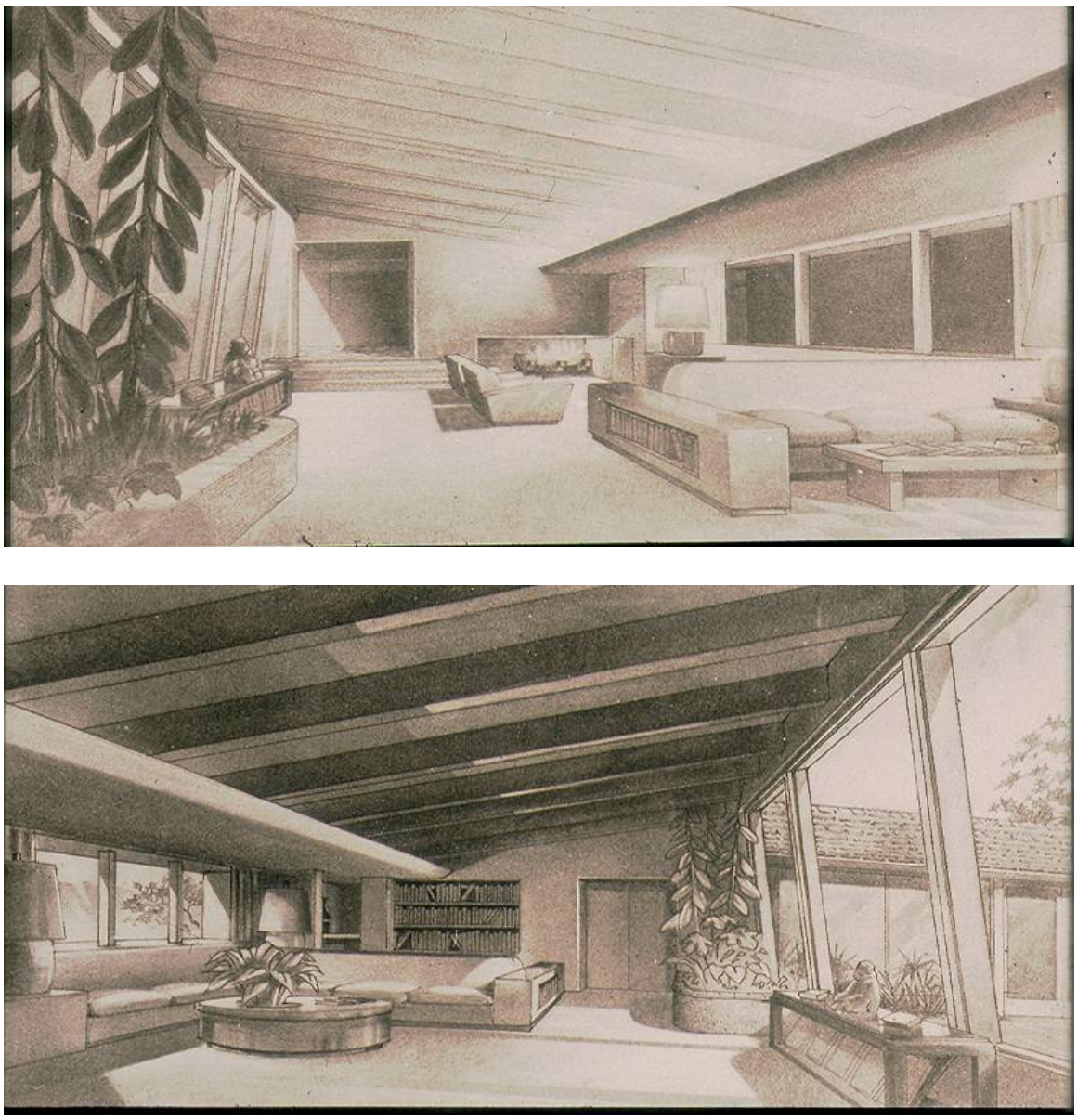

Fig. 3.20 Cliff May, “After the War House,” ca. 1945
Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

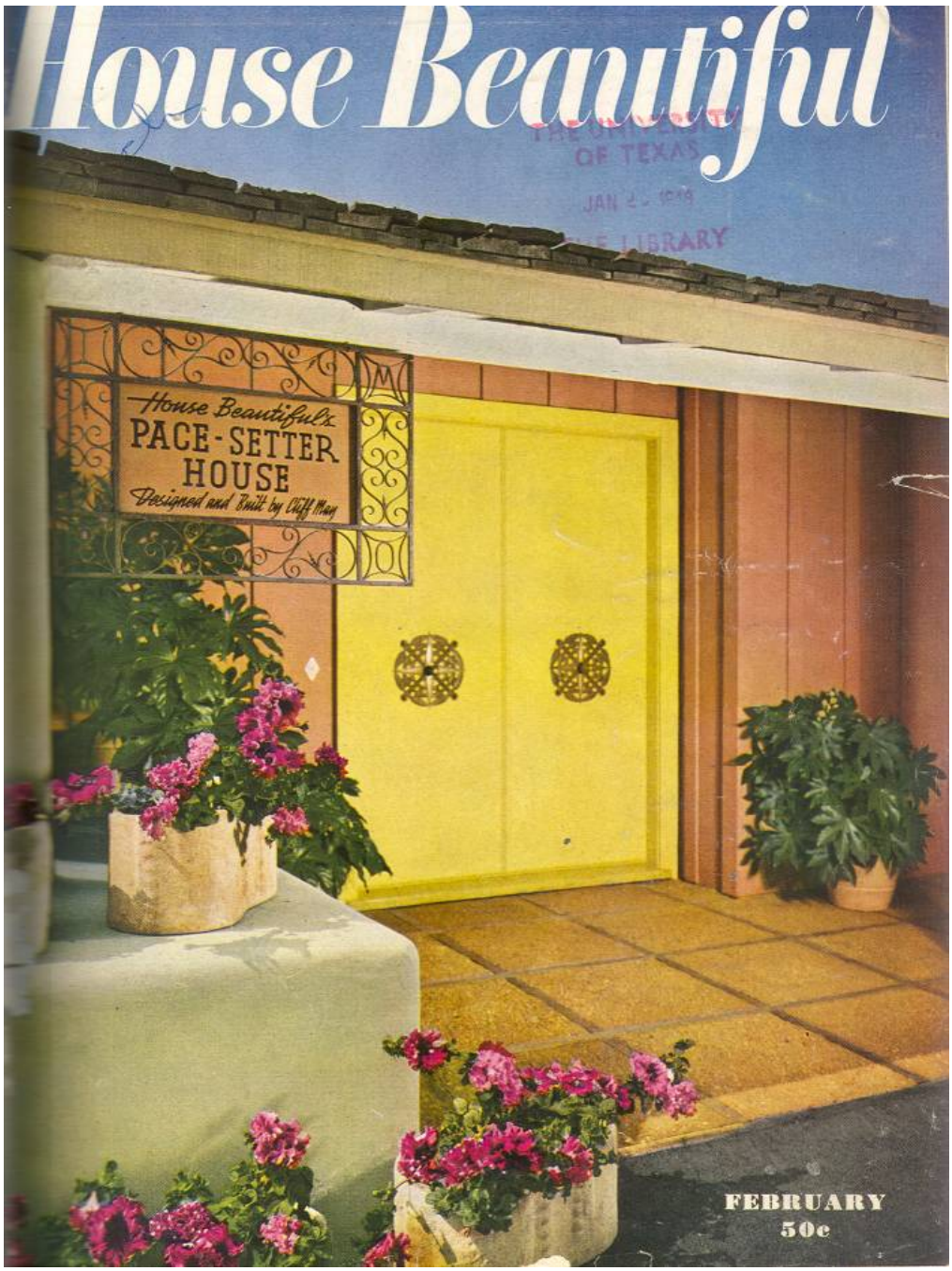


Fig. 3.21 Pace Setter House 1948. Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1948

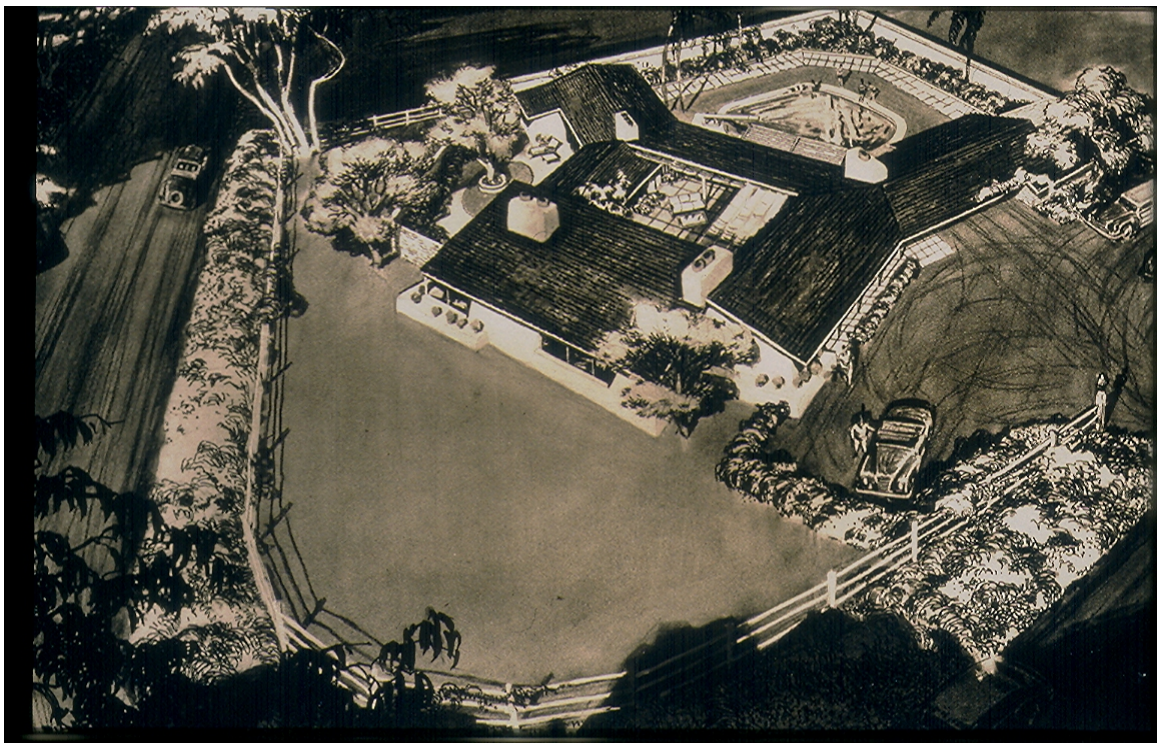

Fig. 3.22 Pace Setter House 1948. Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

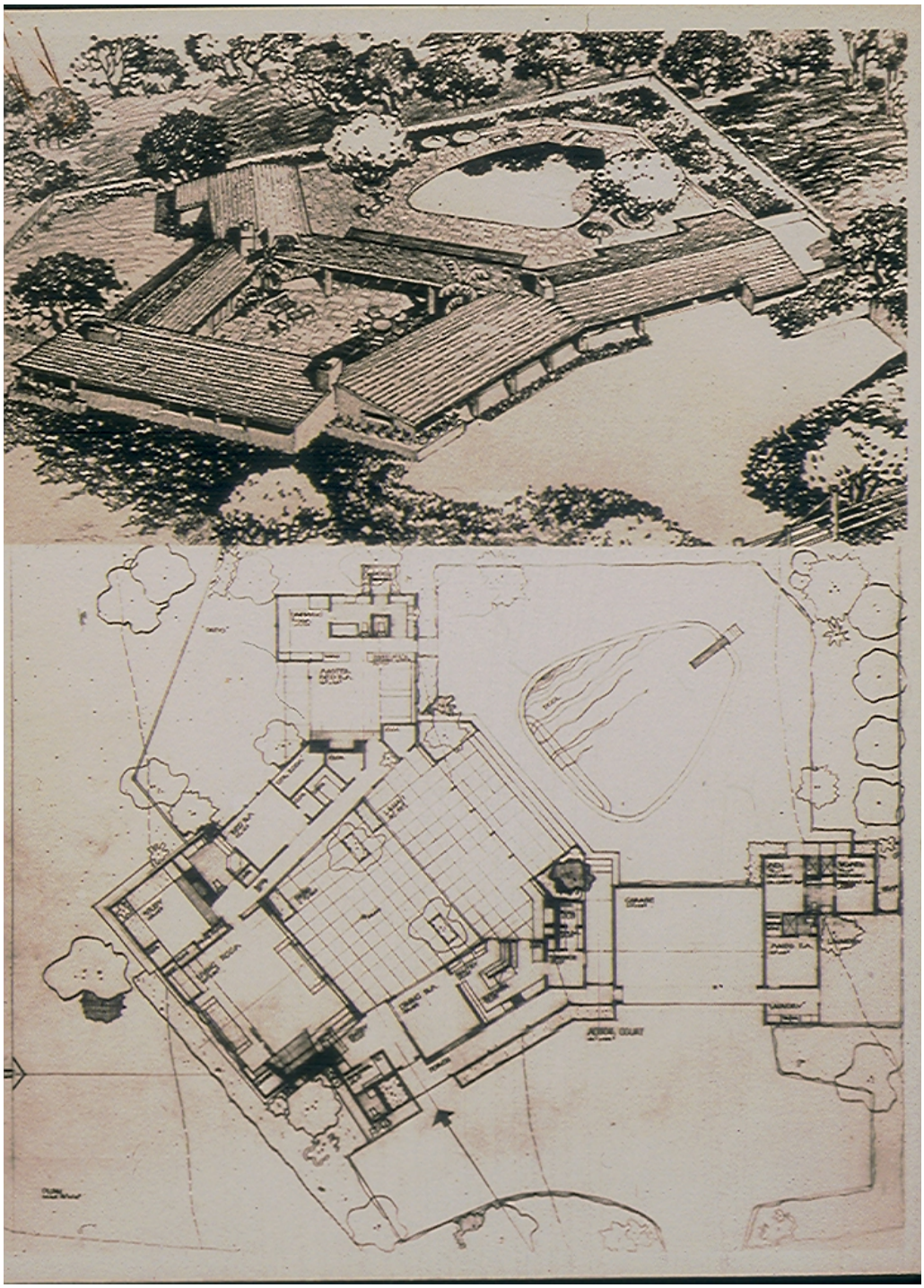

Fig. 3.23 Pace Setter House 1948, plan and sketch. Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948. Source: Cliff May Archives, University of California at Santa Barbara.

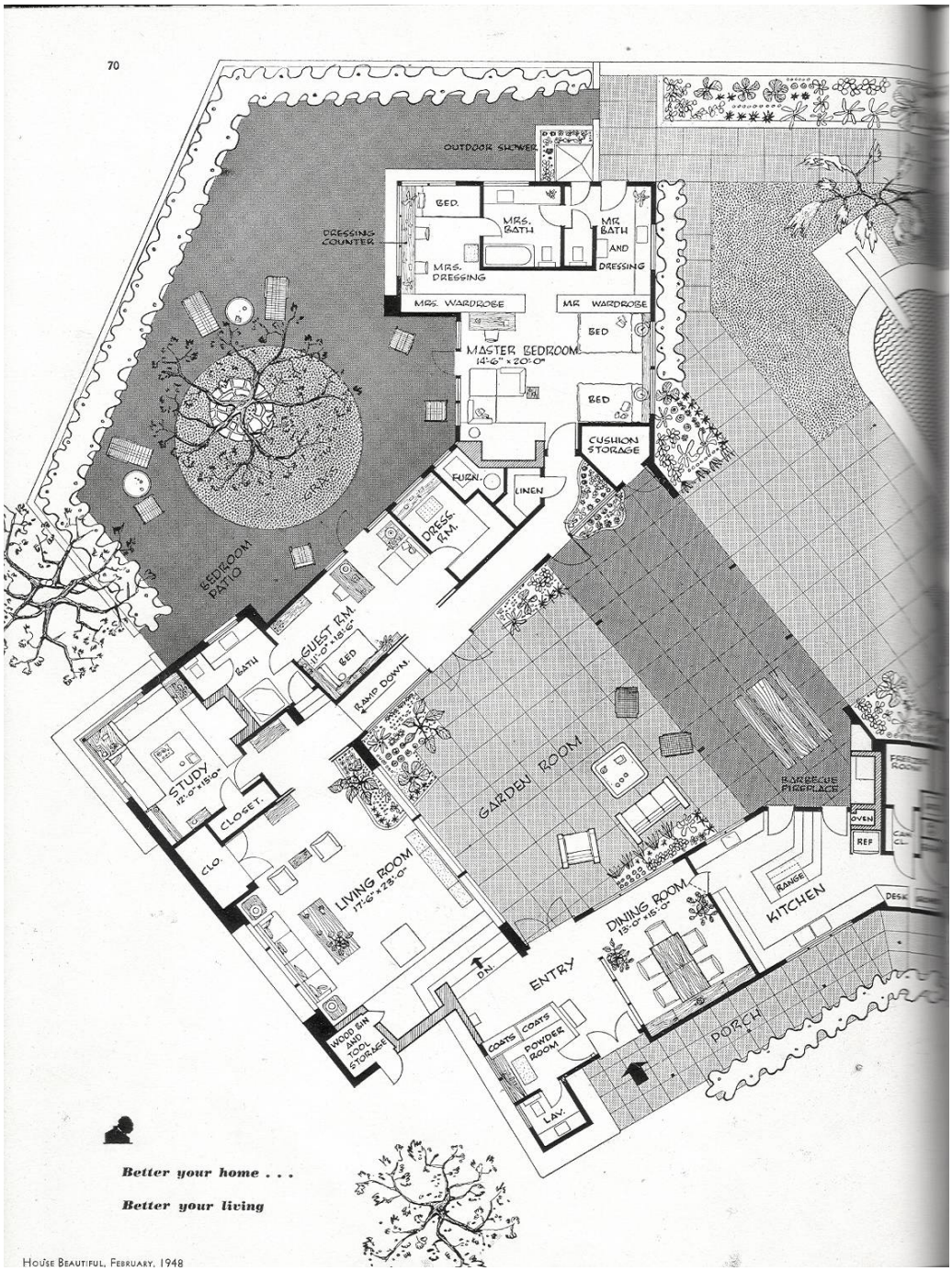


Fig. 3.24 Pace Setter House 1948, plan, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948. Source: *House Beautiful* 1948

Fig. 3.25 Rudolph Schindler, King's Road House, Los Angeles, 1919; Frank Lloyd Wright, Jacobs House, Madison, Wisconsin, 1936.

Fig. 3.26 Pace Setter House 1948, living area looking onto patio, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 3.27  Pace Setter House 1948, patio with sun shade, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1948

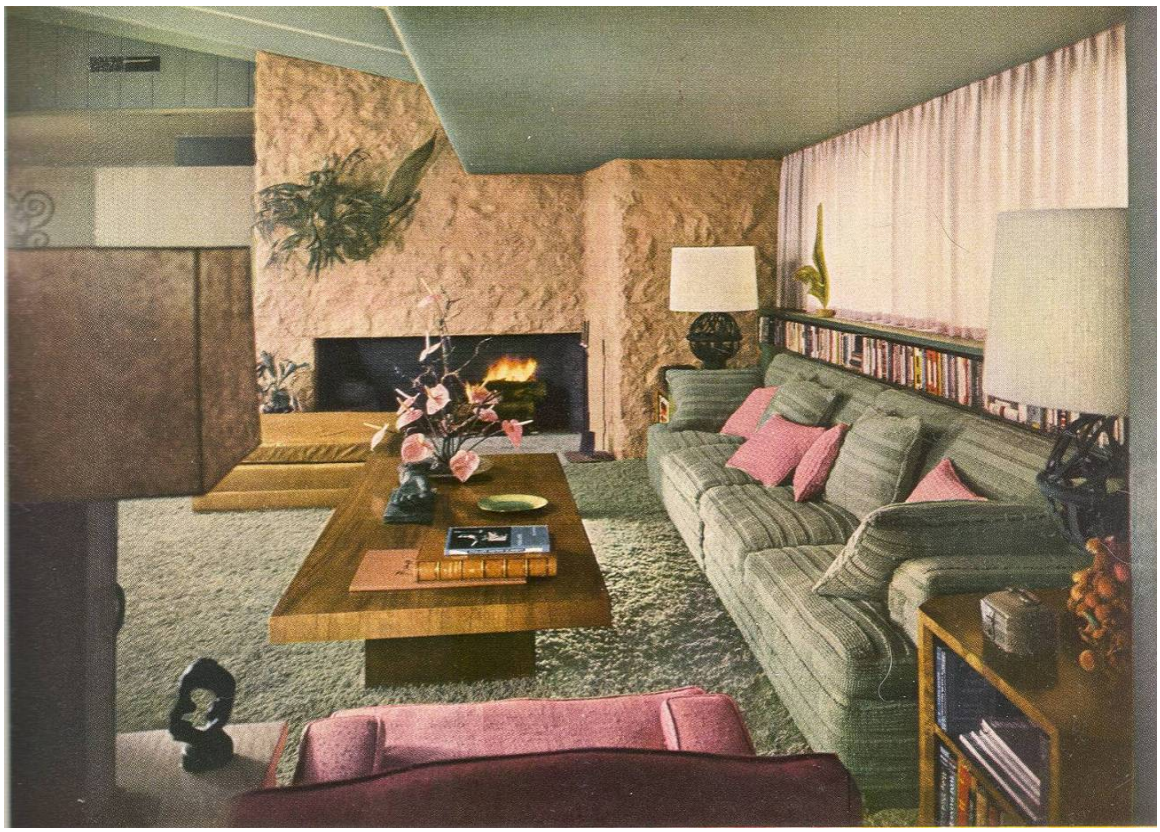

Fig. 3.28 Pace Setter House 1948, living room, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1948.

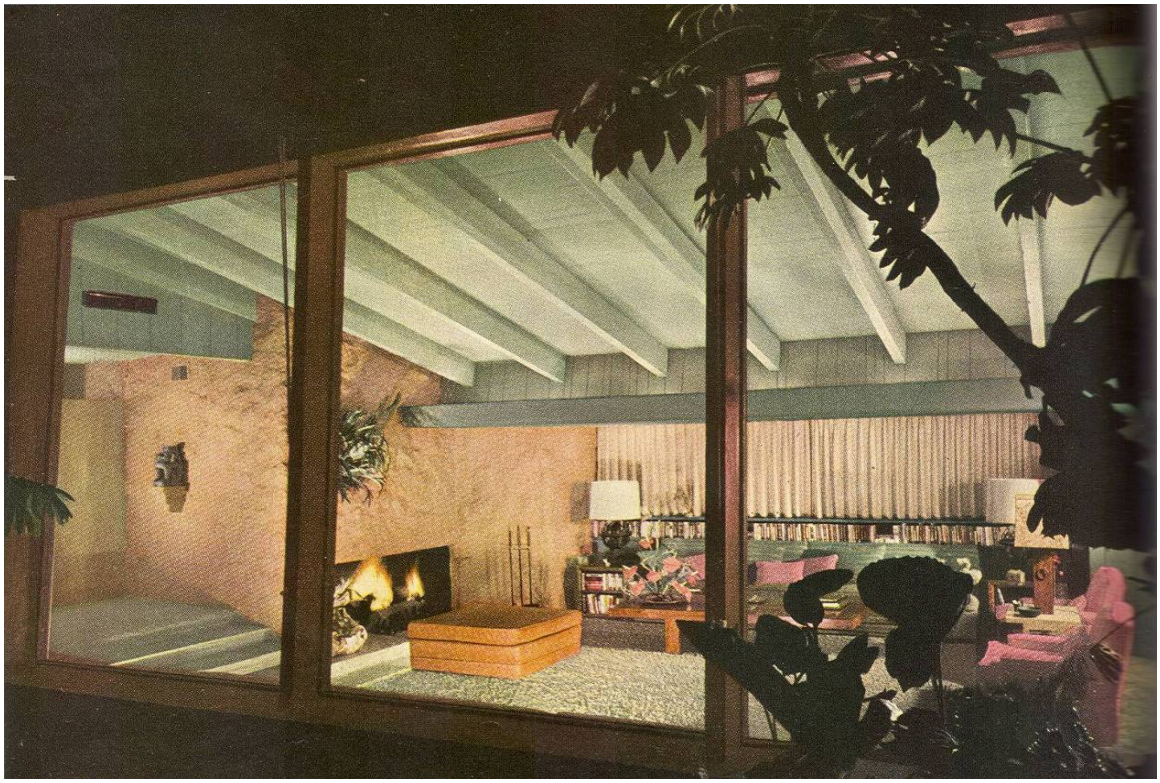

Fig. 3.29 Pace Setter House 1948, living room from patio, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1948.

Fig. 3.30 Pace Setter House 1948, living room, Cliff May, Los Angeles, 1948.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1948.

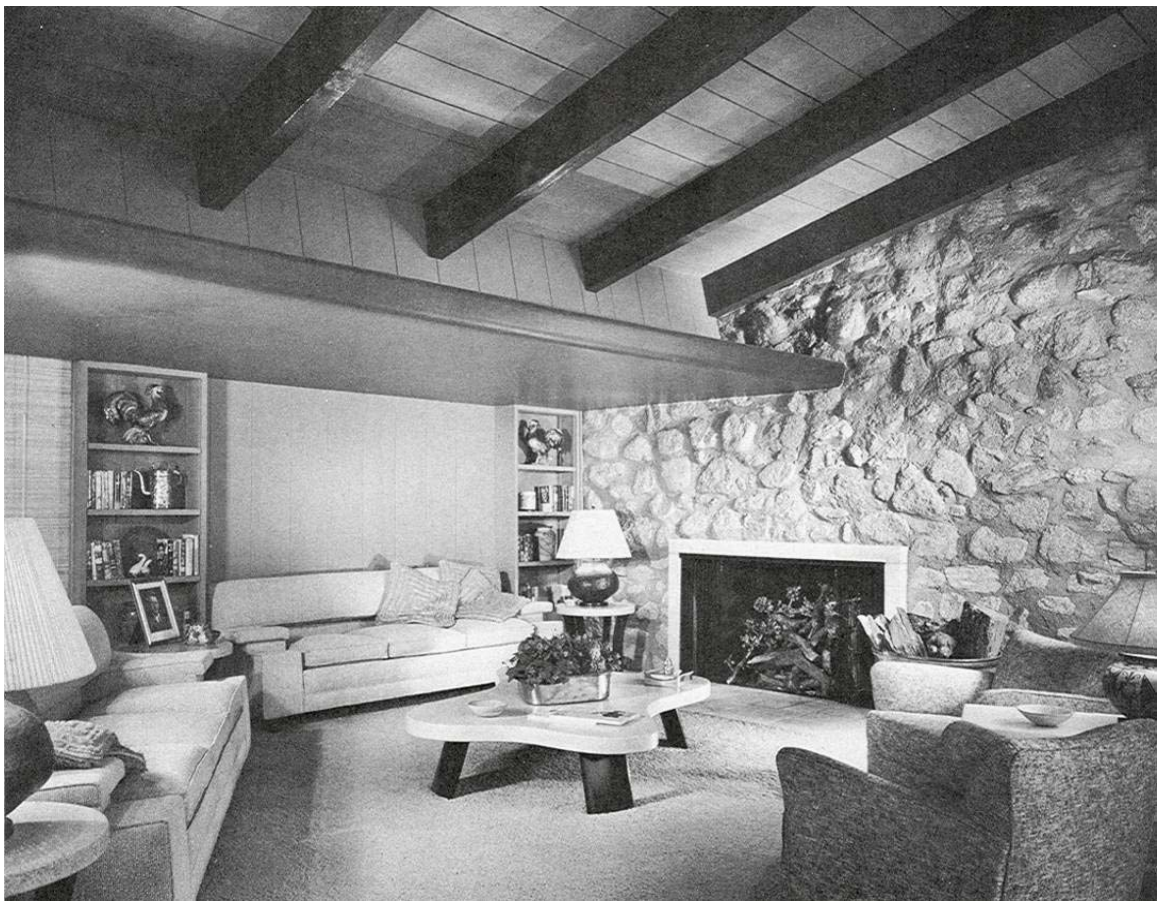

Fig. 3.31 Paul T. Frankl interior for Cliff May
Source: Maynard Parker / Cliff May, *Western Ranch Houses*

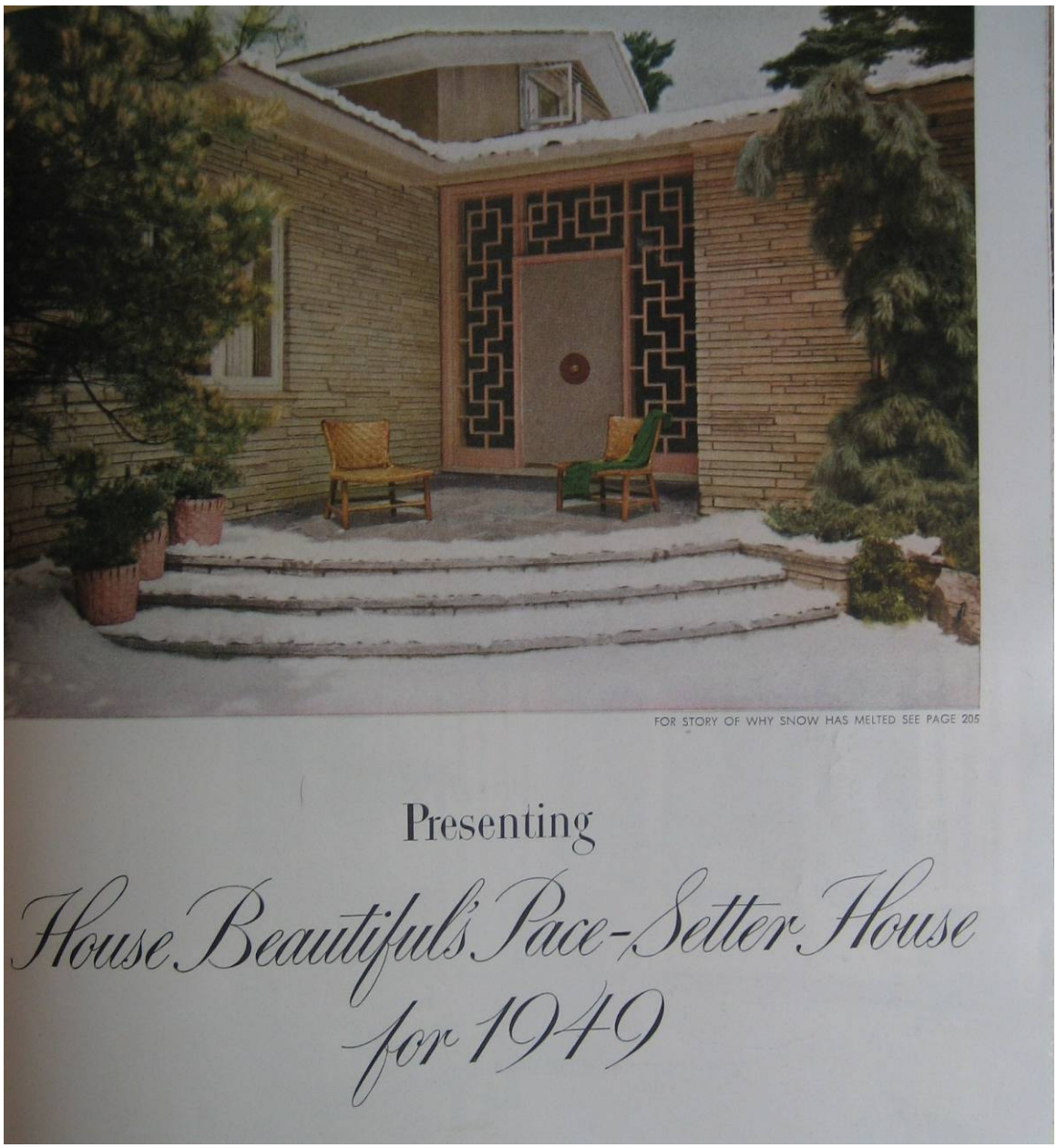


Fig. 3.32 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1949


Fig. 3.33 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. Street façade.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 3.34 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. rear elevation.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

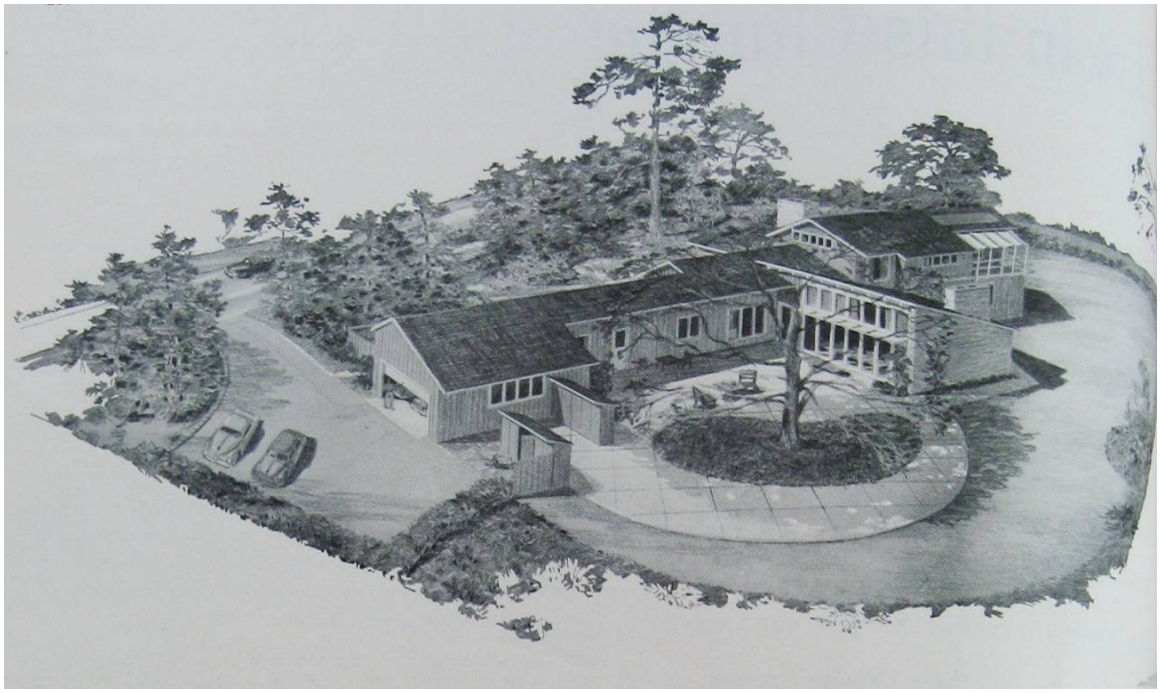

Fig. 3.35 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. Rendering. Source: *House Beautiful* 1949.

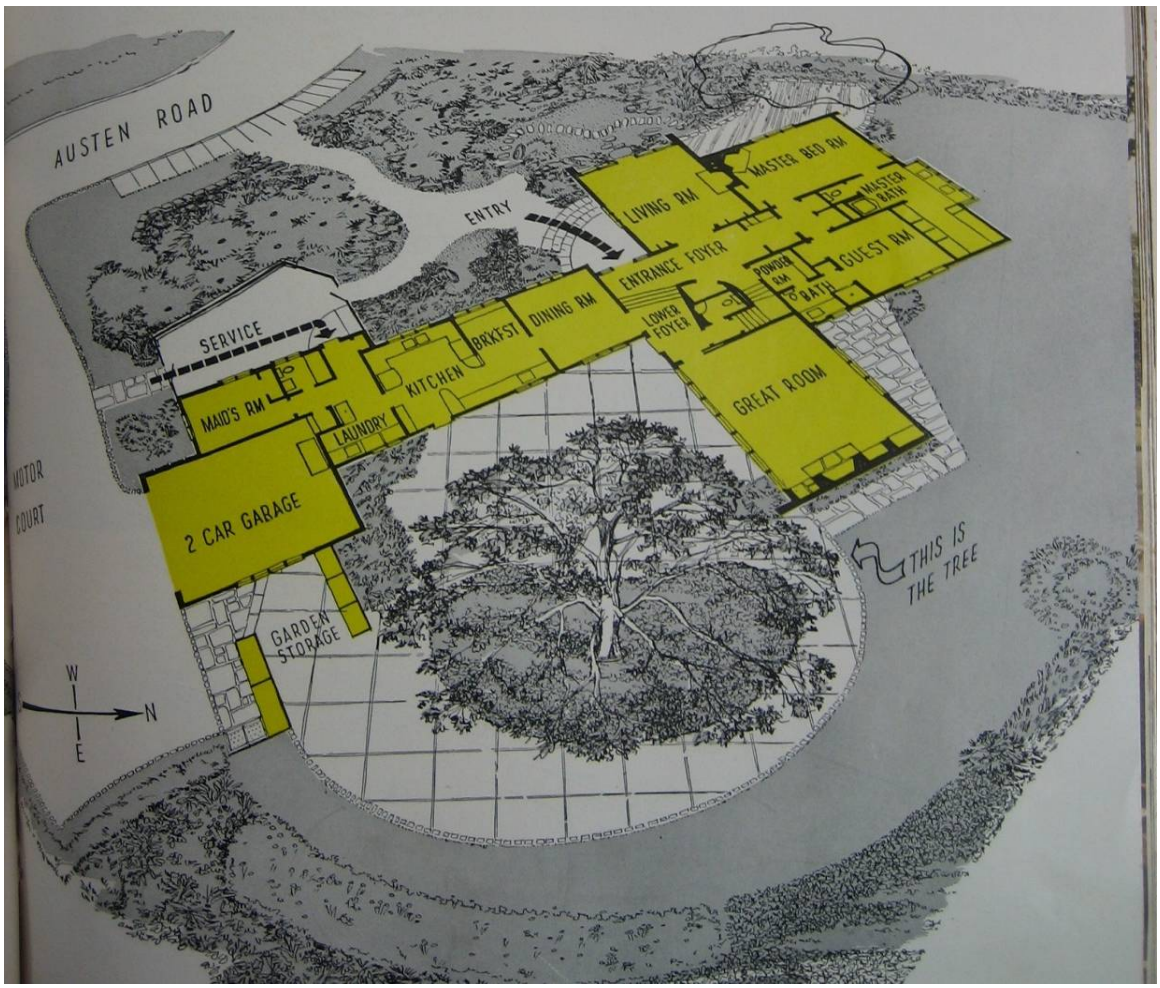


Fig. 3.36 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. plan, site plan.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1949.

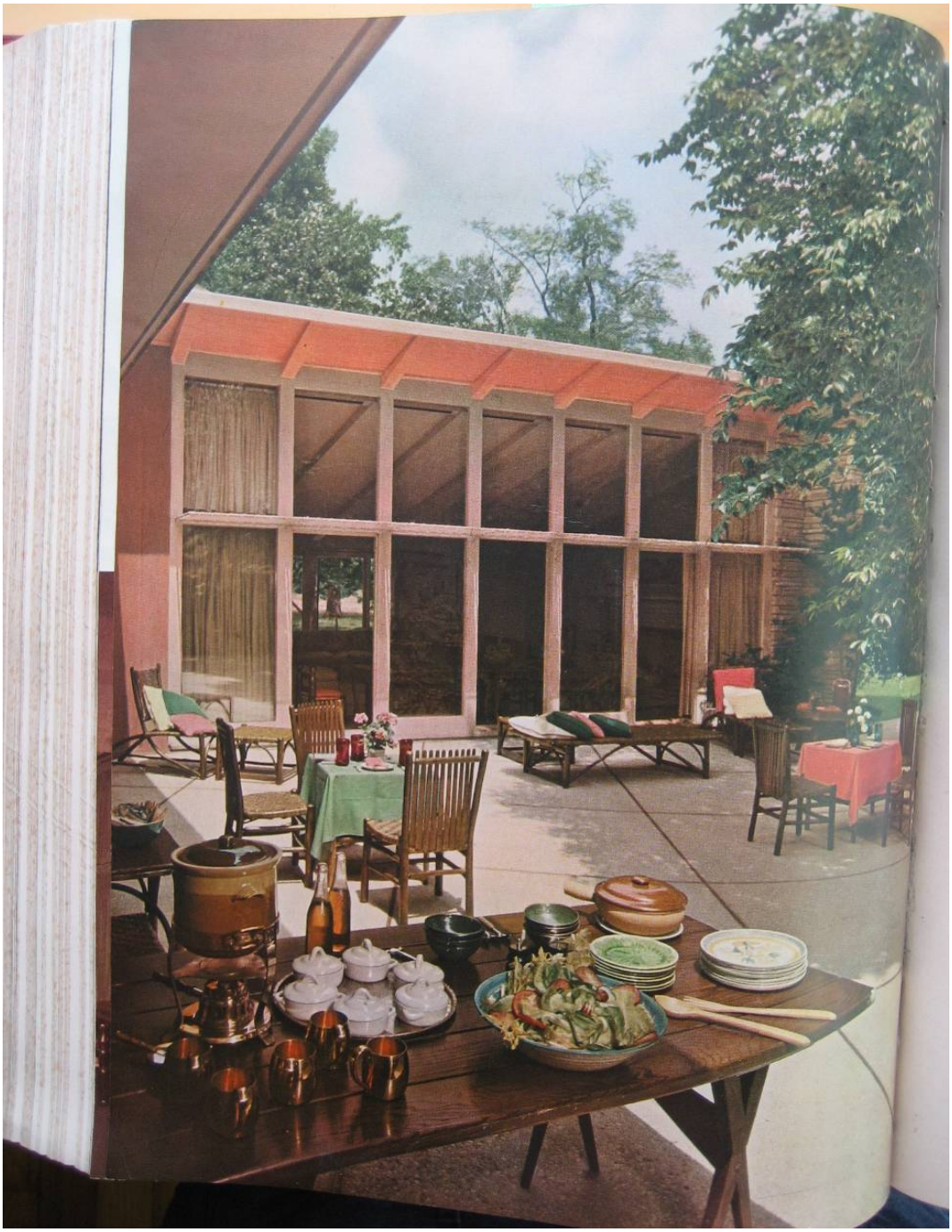

Fig. 3.37 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. sun patio. Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1949.

Fig. 3.38 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. Great room. Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1949.

Fig. 3.39 Pace Setter 1949, Emil Schmidlin, Orange, New Jersey, 1949. Great room overlooking patio, with sun shading.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1949.

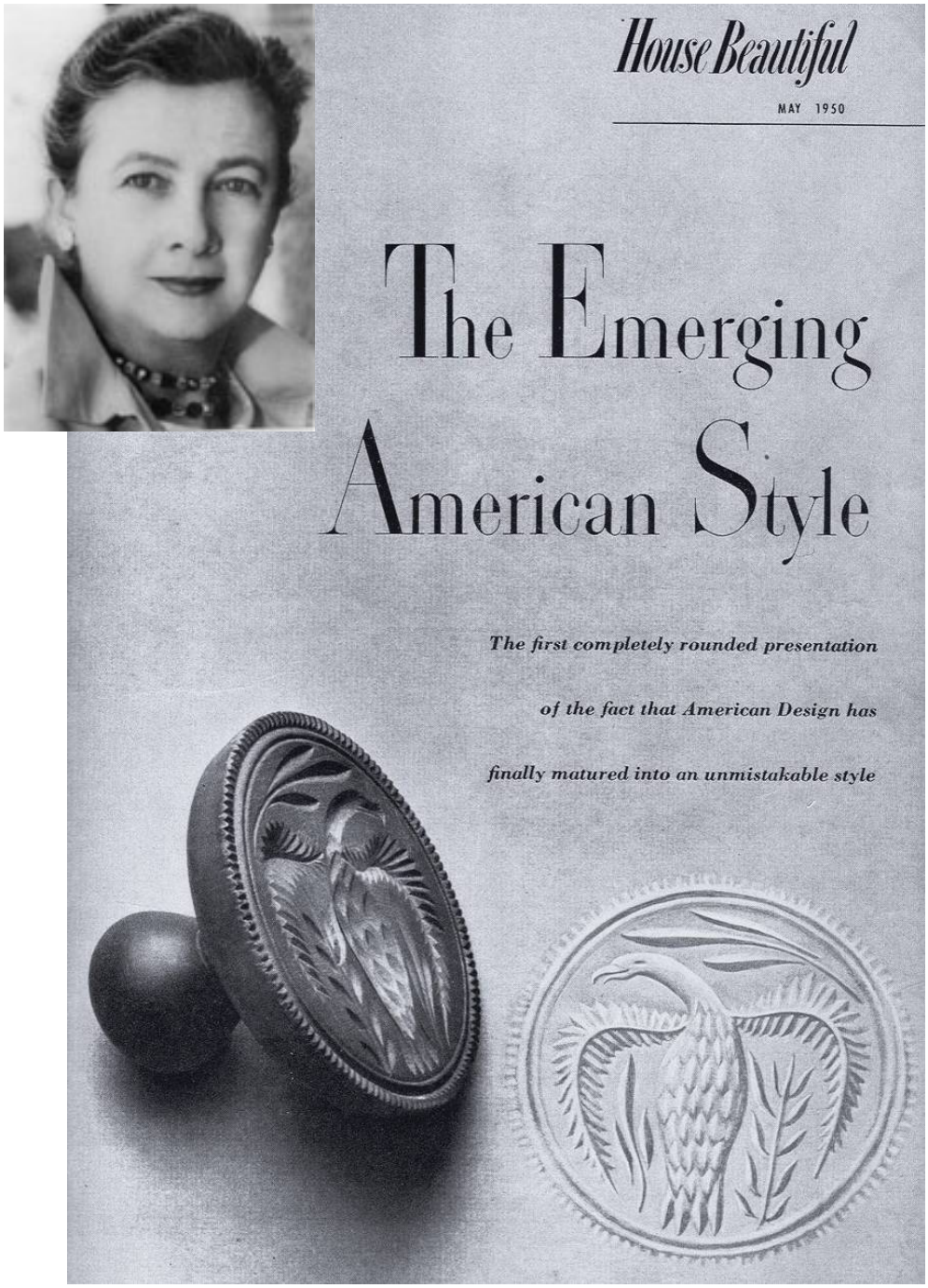


Fig. 4.1 Elizabeth Gordon (left) and the Emerging American Style
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950


Fig. 4.2 The American Style Logo, “stamp of approval.”
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950


Fig. 4.3 The Postwar Lifestyle or the "Station Wagon Way of Life."
Pictured: Cliff May family, at May's Ranch House Classic, Los Angeles.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950


Fig. 4.4 A Postwar family and their electronic gadgets
Source: unknown photographer; *Vital Forms* (2002).

Fig. 4.5 Postwar Life: Family and Privacy. Pictured: Cliff May with his children, at May's Ranch House Classic, Los Angeles, photographed ca. 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 4.6 Postwar Life: Family and Privacy. Pictured: Cliff May's children on horseback, at May's Ranch House Classic, Los Angeles, photographed ca. 1946. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

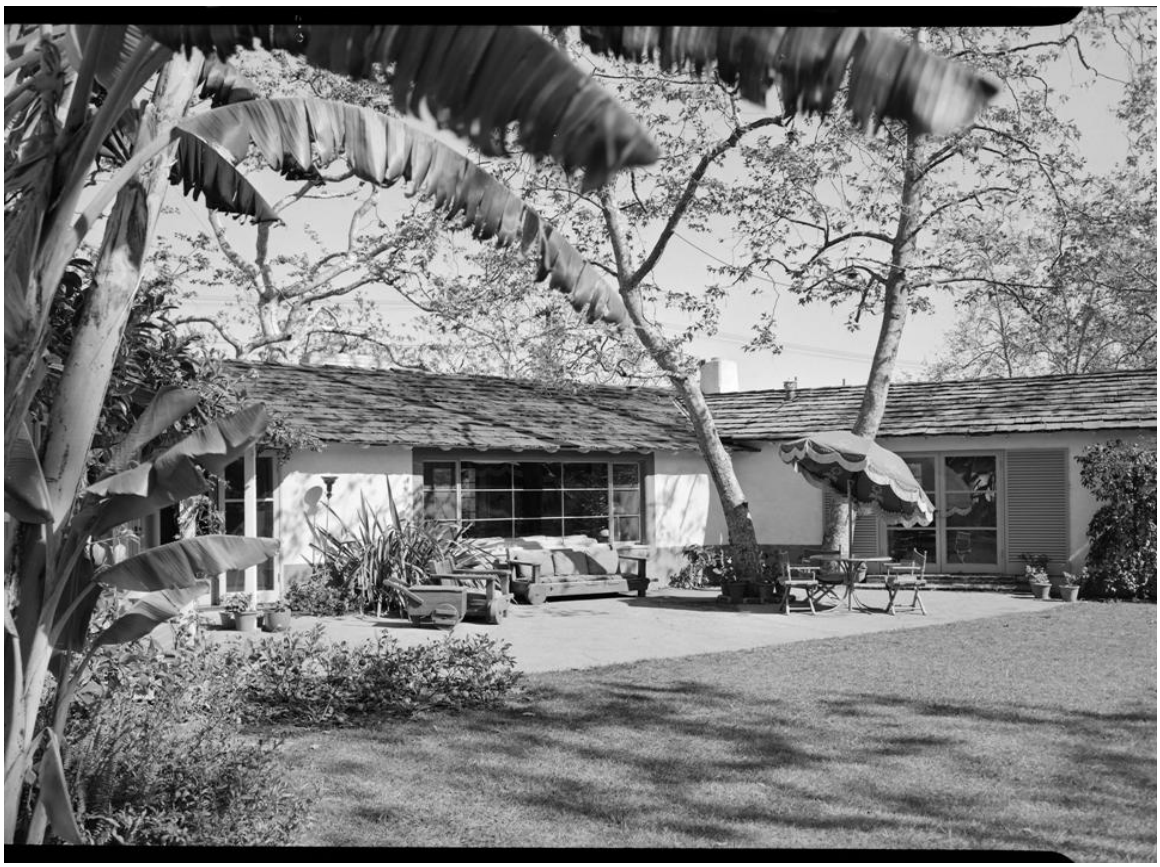

Fig. 4.7 A house turned inward, at Cliff May's Ranch House Classic, Los Angeles, photographed ca. 1946.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

# *How to Recognize*

# The American Style

***Its design should be agreeably fitted to its purpose.*** If it is a structure, it should fit its environment. If it is a garden, it should take advantage of its site, the needs of the family who will use it, and be so constituted that it is beautiful twelve months of the year. If it is furnishings, it should perform effectively and simply—without tortuous, stylistic tricks.

***Its materials should be honestly and appropriately used*** with some indication that their nature and capacity have been understood, appreciated, and made the most of—not made to imitate something, or complicated beyond their true nature.

***It should take advantage of our numerous technologies*** (if they pertain) which can be harnessed today to make things perform better, wear longer, require less upkeep.

***It should have no superfluous ornament*** which is tacked on as an afterthought to the basic design. It may have ornament, but it must be integrated ornament. Our American talent for simplification is enormous, and some of our most beautiful things are the simplest.

***It may be reminiscent of our past,*** but it will be a *modified, simplified, almost impressionistic version of the original.* If we do use the past, it is because of its usefulness, not because it is "an authentic copy." If it is "periody," it is most likely to be a derivation of some of our older, native American design idioms like Cape Cod, Shaker, Pennsylvania Dutch, Spanish, etc.

***It may be Modern,*** but it will be an American version of Modern, not a straight European version. Again the adapting, modifying concept applies, for we change what we import.

***It should have the appeal of the familiar.*** We Americans like the new, but in practice we want the radically new to have some familiar link to its previous prototypes.

***It should appeal to common sense.*** Americans' reaction to the intellectual stunt or trick is "so what." We do not judge things intellectually, but by common sense.

***It should combine beauty and utility,*** for in the best American design they are indivisible. Neither abstract beauty nor mechanistic utility is enough by itself. We Americans want both.

HOUSE BEAUTIFUL, MAY, 1950

Fig. 4.8 "How to Recognize The American Style"
Source: *House Beautiful* May 1950

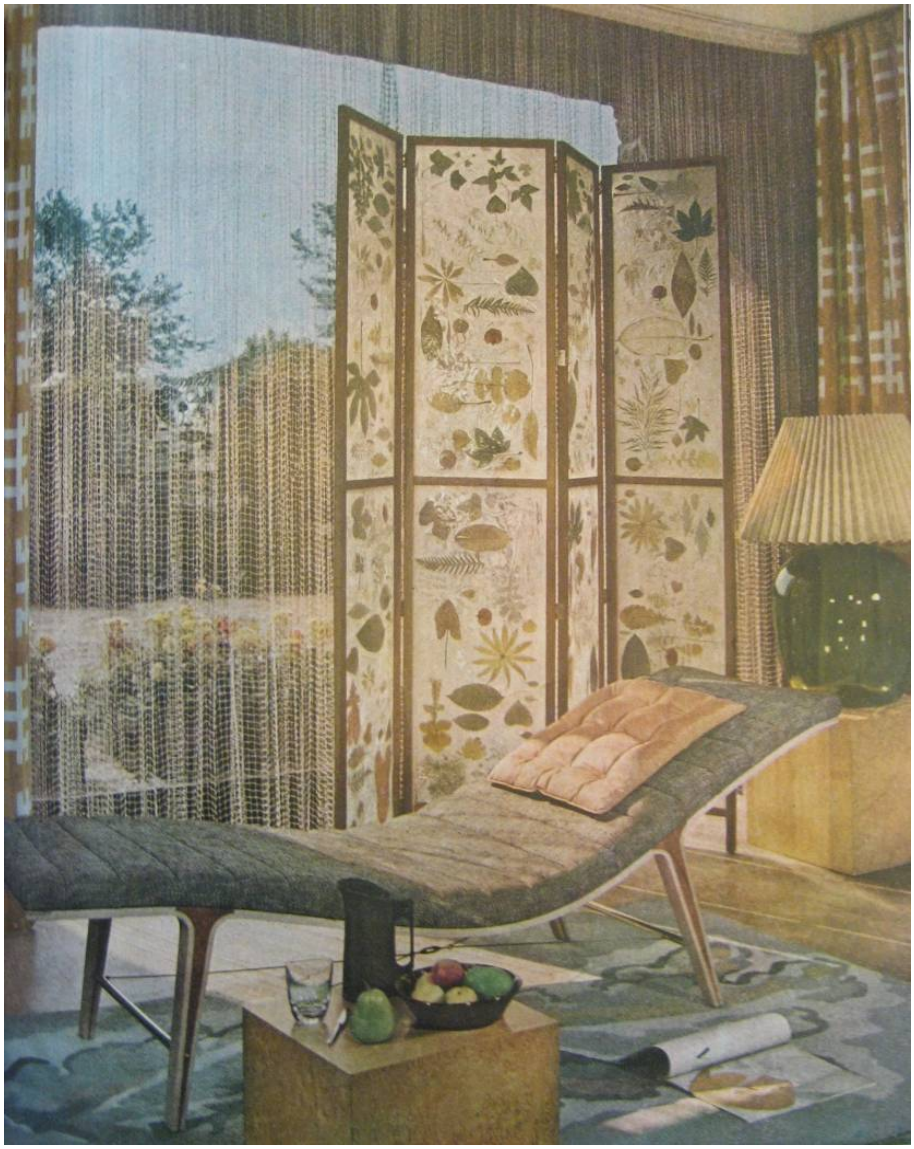

Fig. 4.9  Naturalism in color, texture and pattern
Source: *House Beautiful*  November 1950

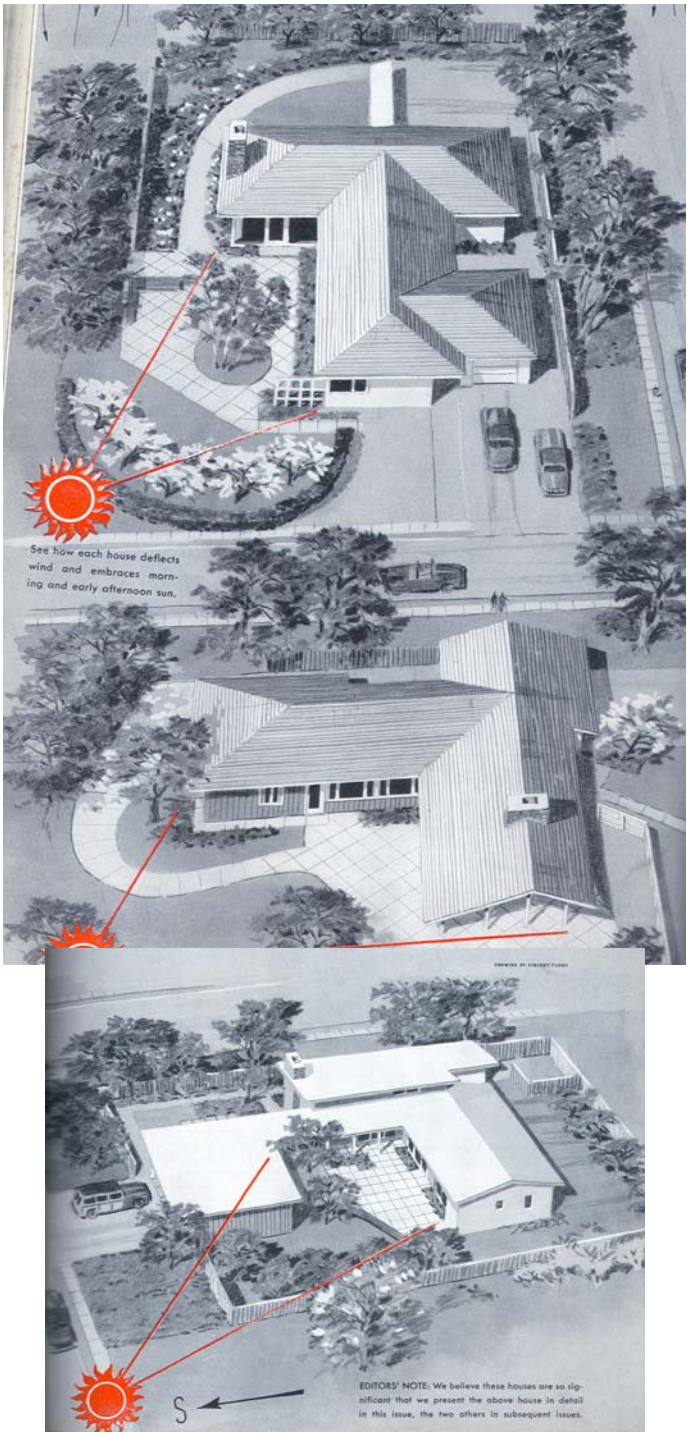


Fig. 4.10 Three Pace Setters for 1950, for David D. Bohannon, San Mateo, California, 1950.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950

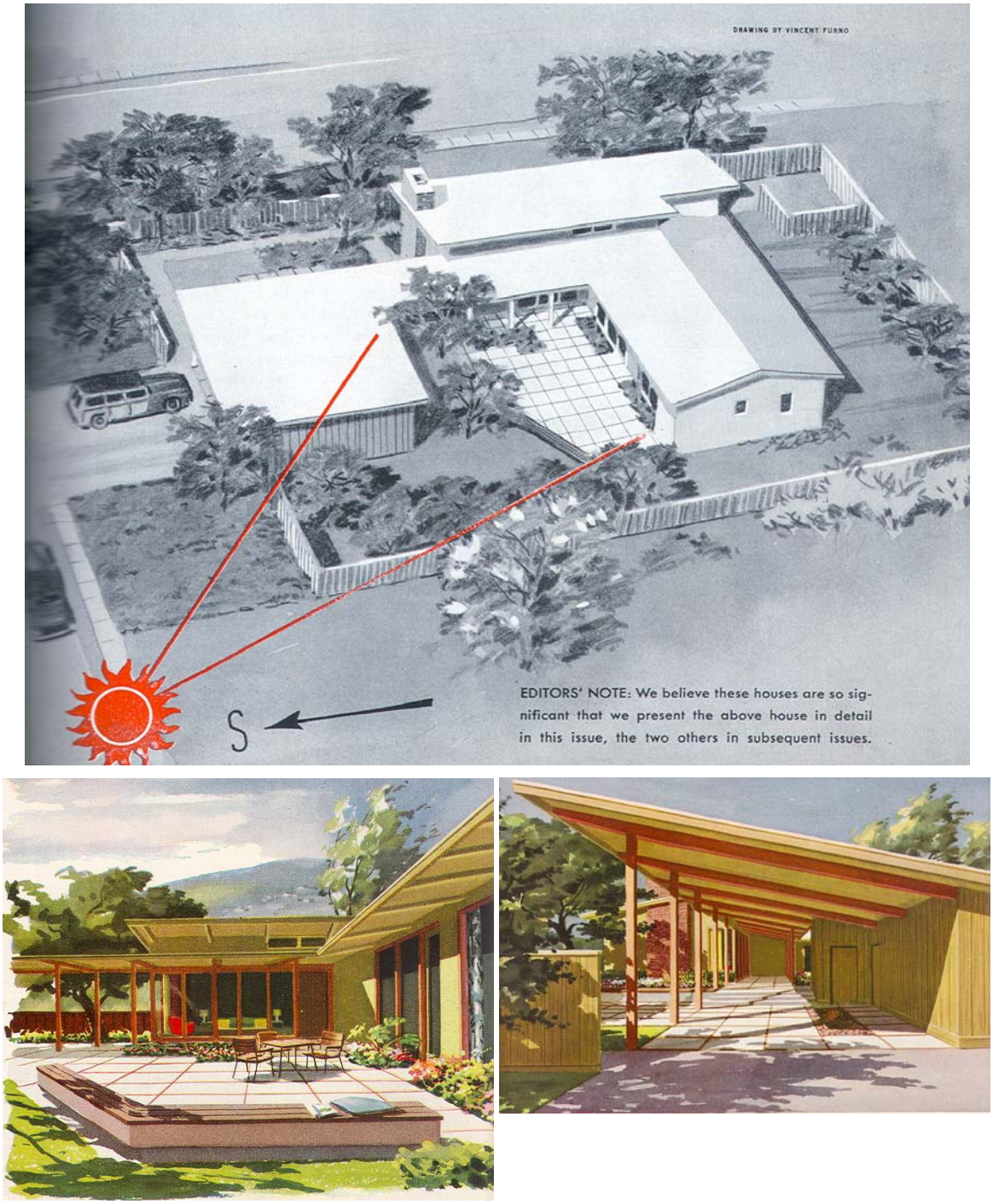


Fig. 4.11 Pace Setter 1950a, Edwin Wadsworth for David D. Bohannon, San Mateo, California, 1950.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950

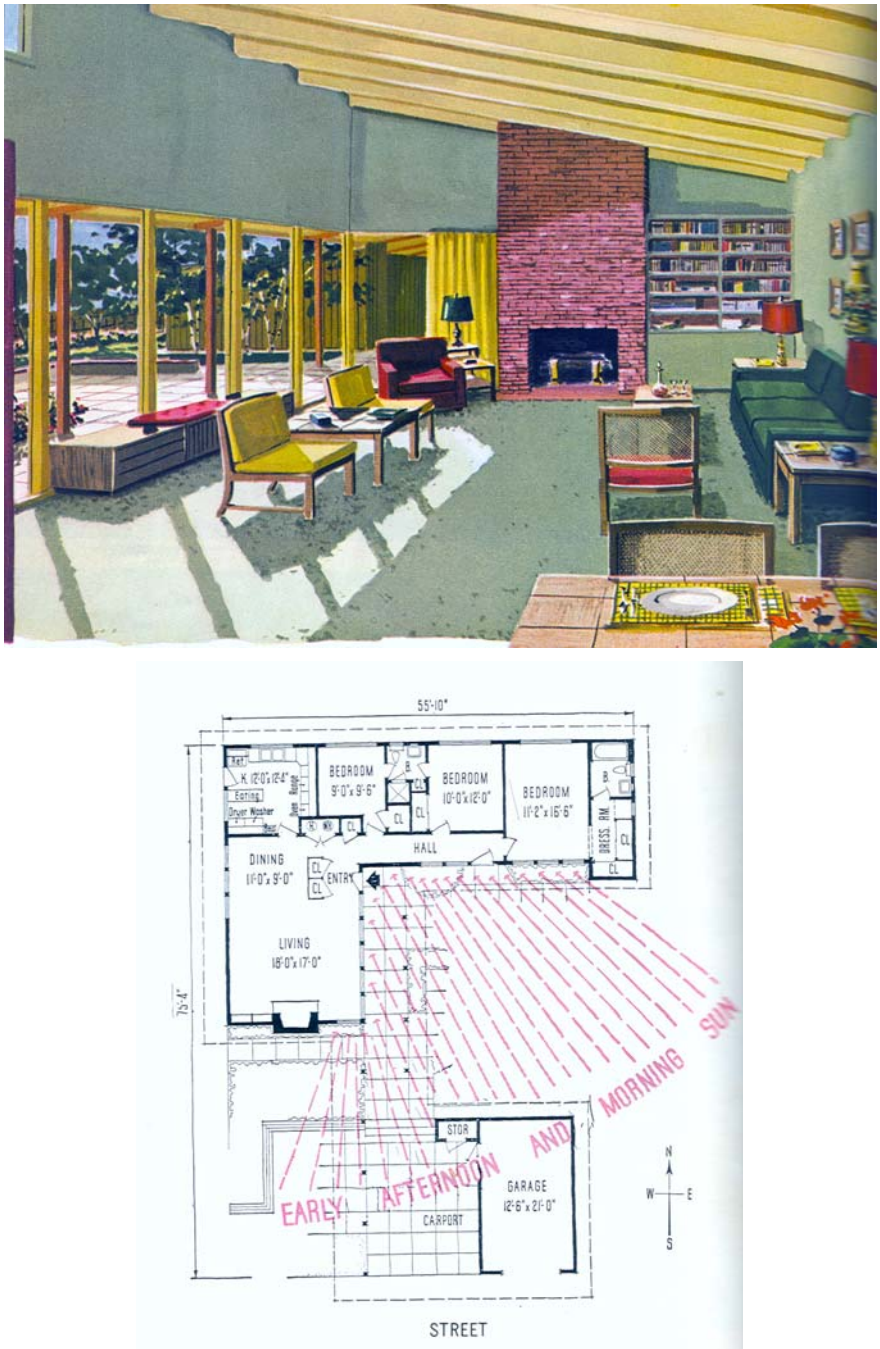


Fig. 4.12 Pace Setter 1950a, Edwin Wadsworth for David D. Bohannon, San Mateo, California, 1950. plan and interior.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950

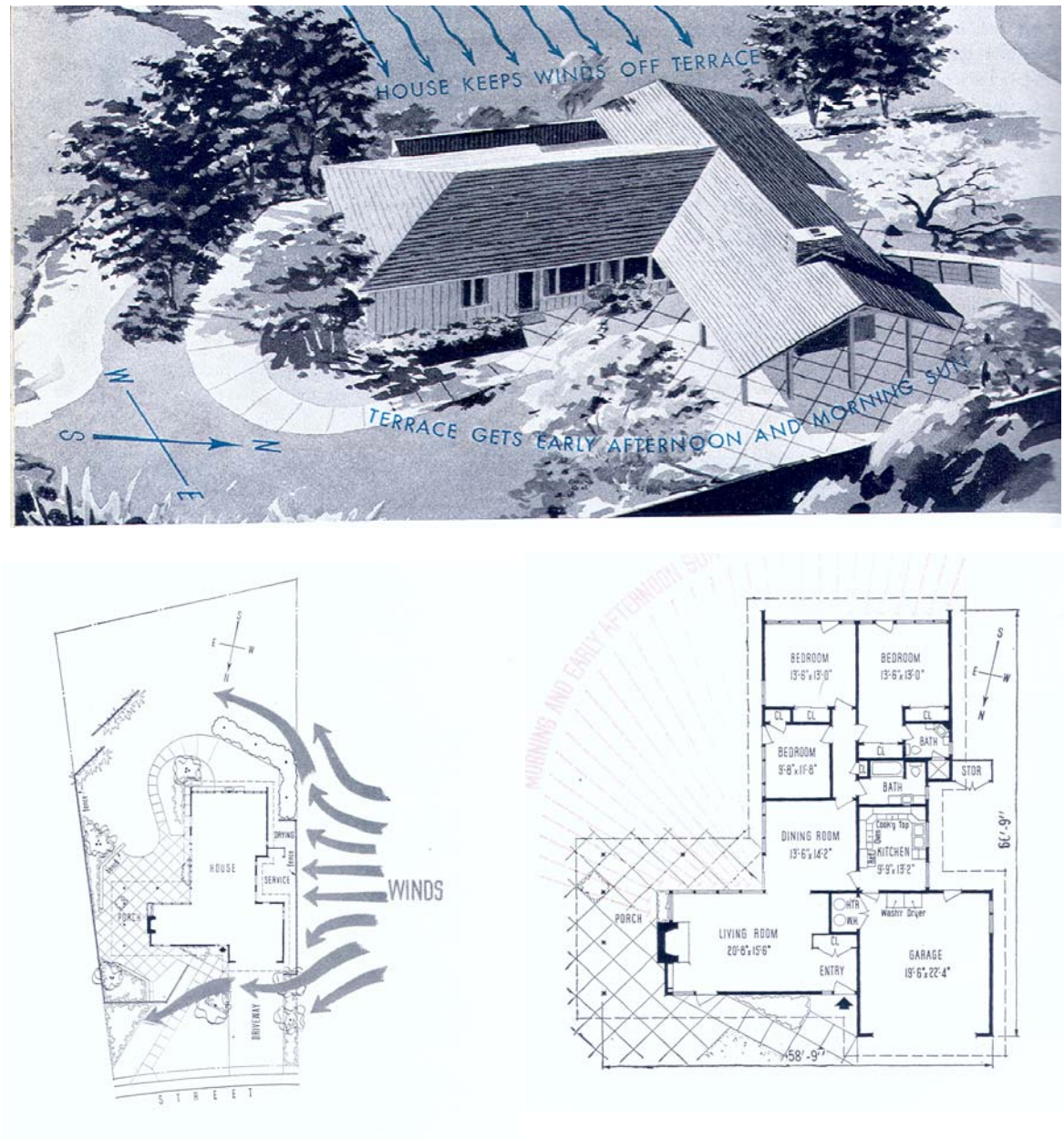


Fig. 4.13 Pace Setters 1950b, Edwin Wadsworth and Marcus Stedman for David D. Bohannon, San Mateo, California, 1950.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950

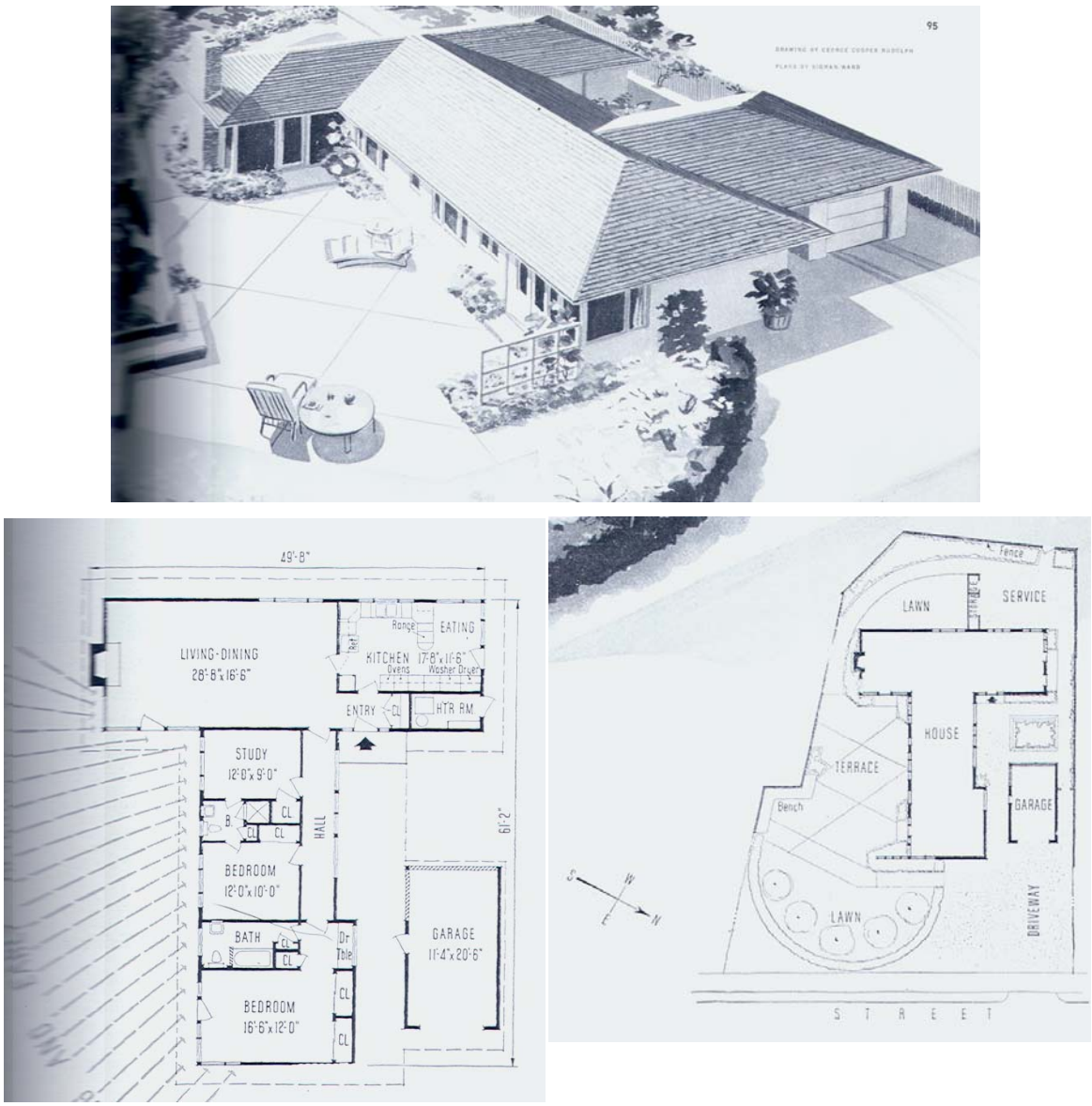


Fig. 4.14 Pace Setters 1950c, Edwin Wadsworth for David D. Bohannon, San Mateo, California, 1950.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1950.


Fig. 4.15 Pace Setter 1951, Julius Gregory, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1951.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1951

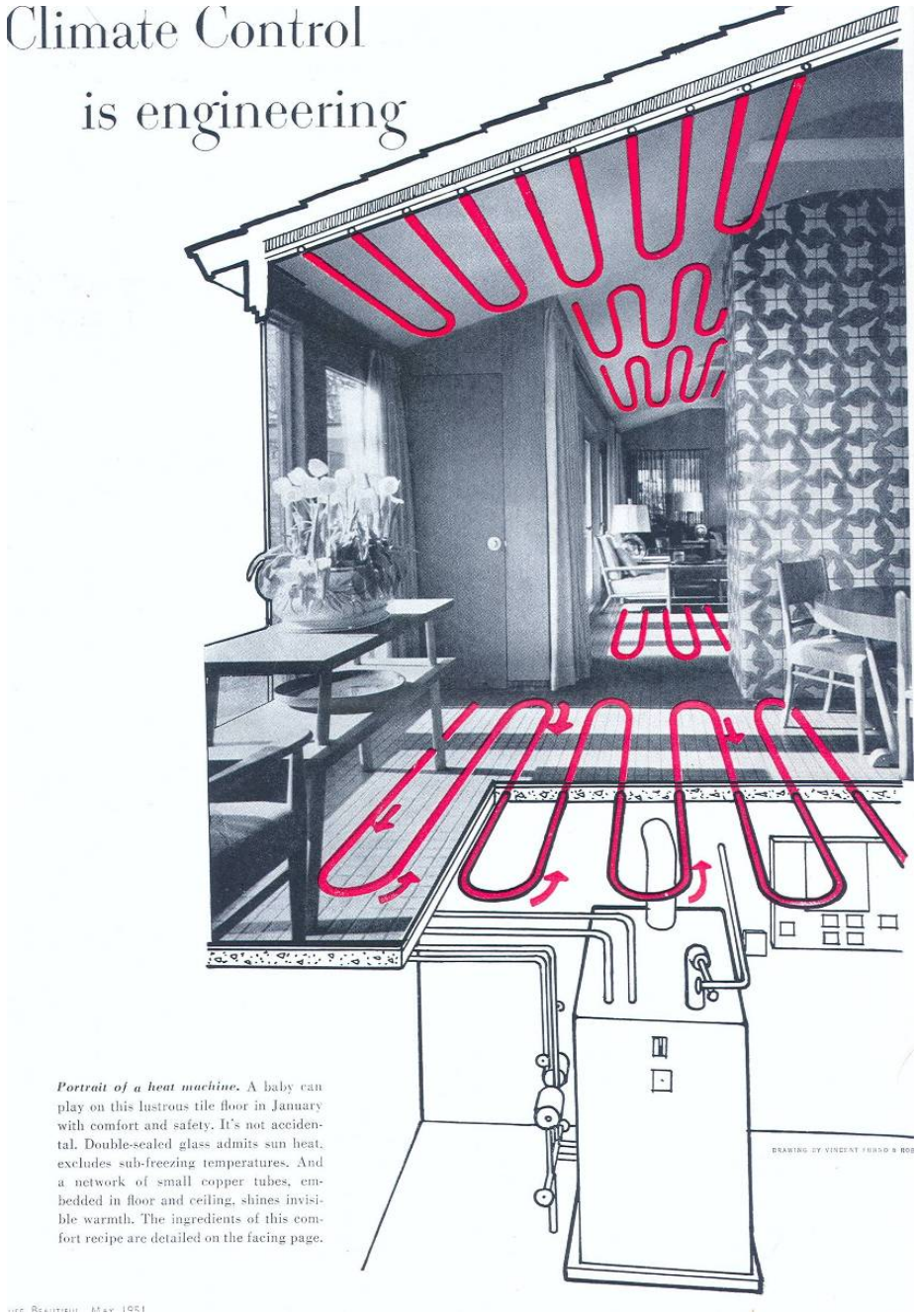


Fig. 4.16 Pace Setter 1951, Julius Gregory, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1951. Radiant heating diagram.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1951.


Fig. 4.17 Pace Setters 1951, Julius Gregory, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1951. Sheaf of wheat motif.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1951

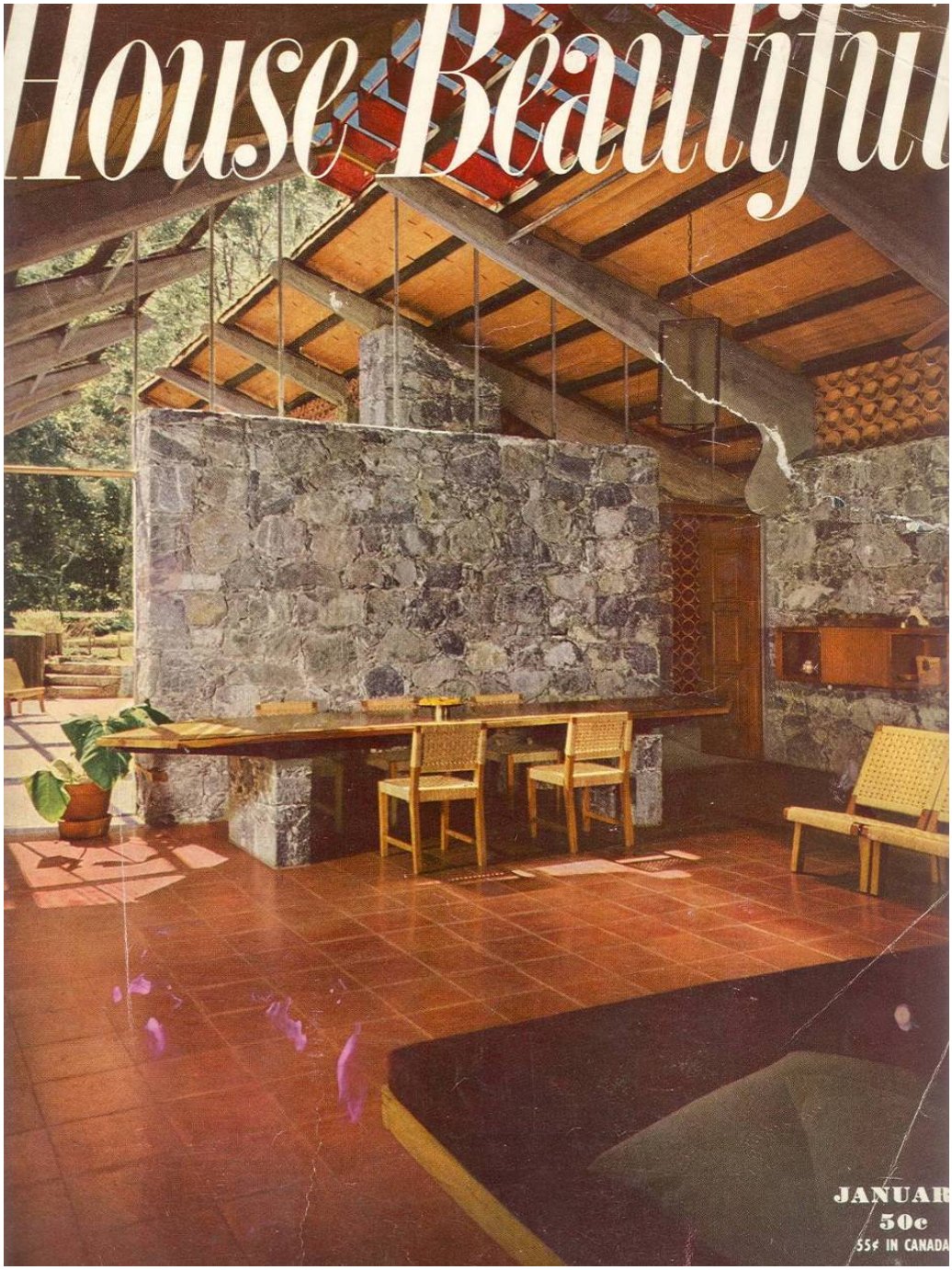


Fig. 4.18 Anshen & Allen, Silverstone House, Mexico, 1949. Representing "American Style" and naturalism.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1951

Fig. 4.19 Anshen & Allen, Silverstone House, Mexico, 1949. Representing "American Style" and naturalism.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1951

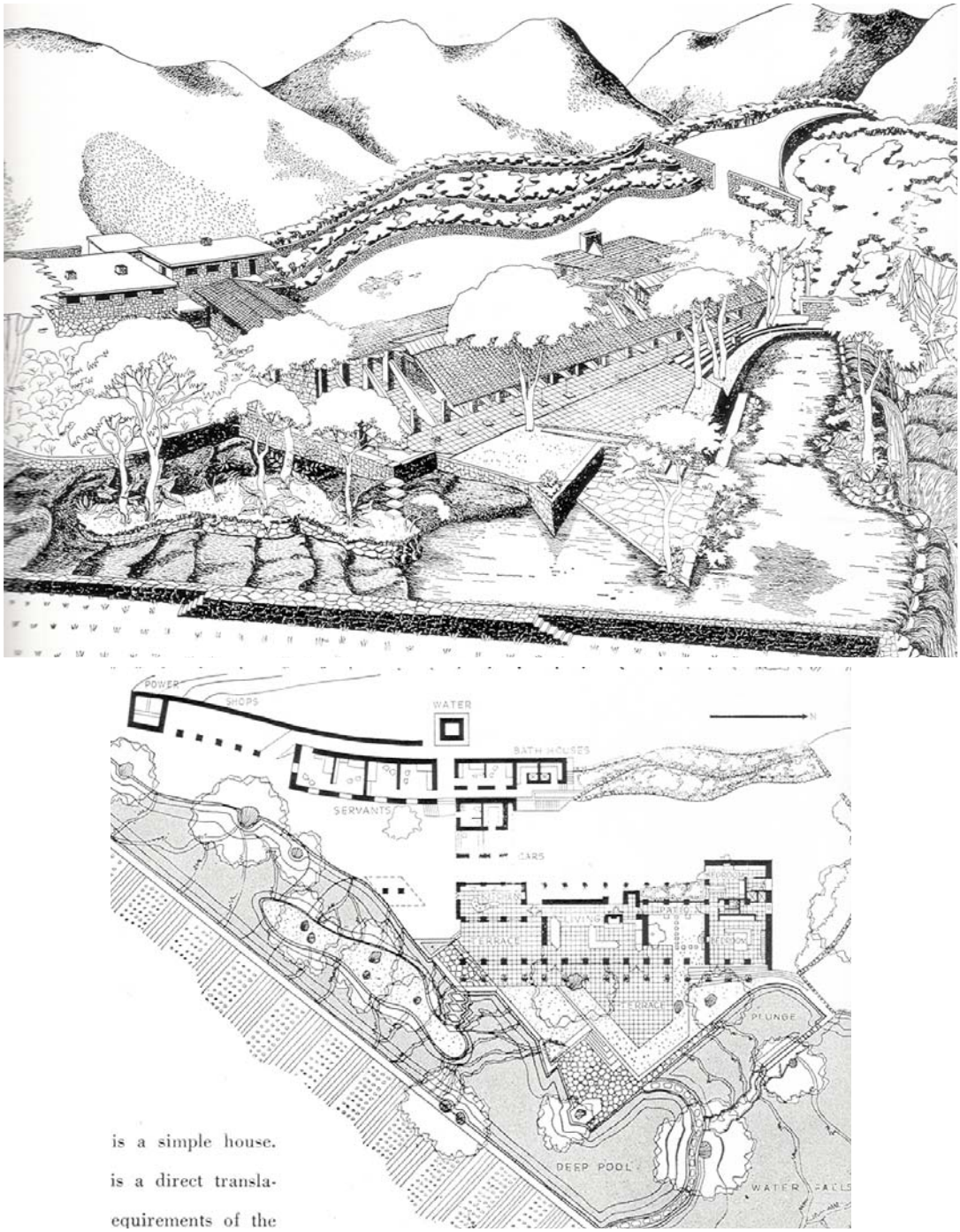


Fig. 4.20 Anshen & Allen, Silverstone House, Mexico, 1949. sketch and site plan. Source: *House Beautiful* 1951

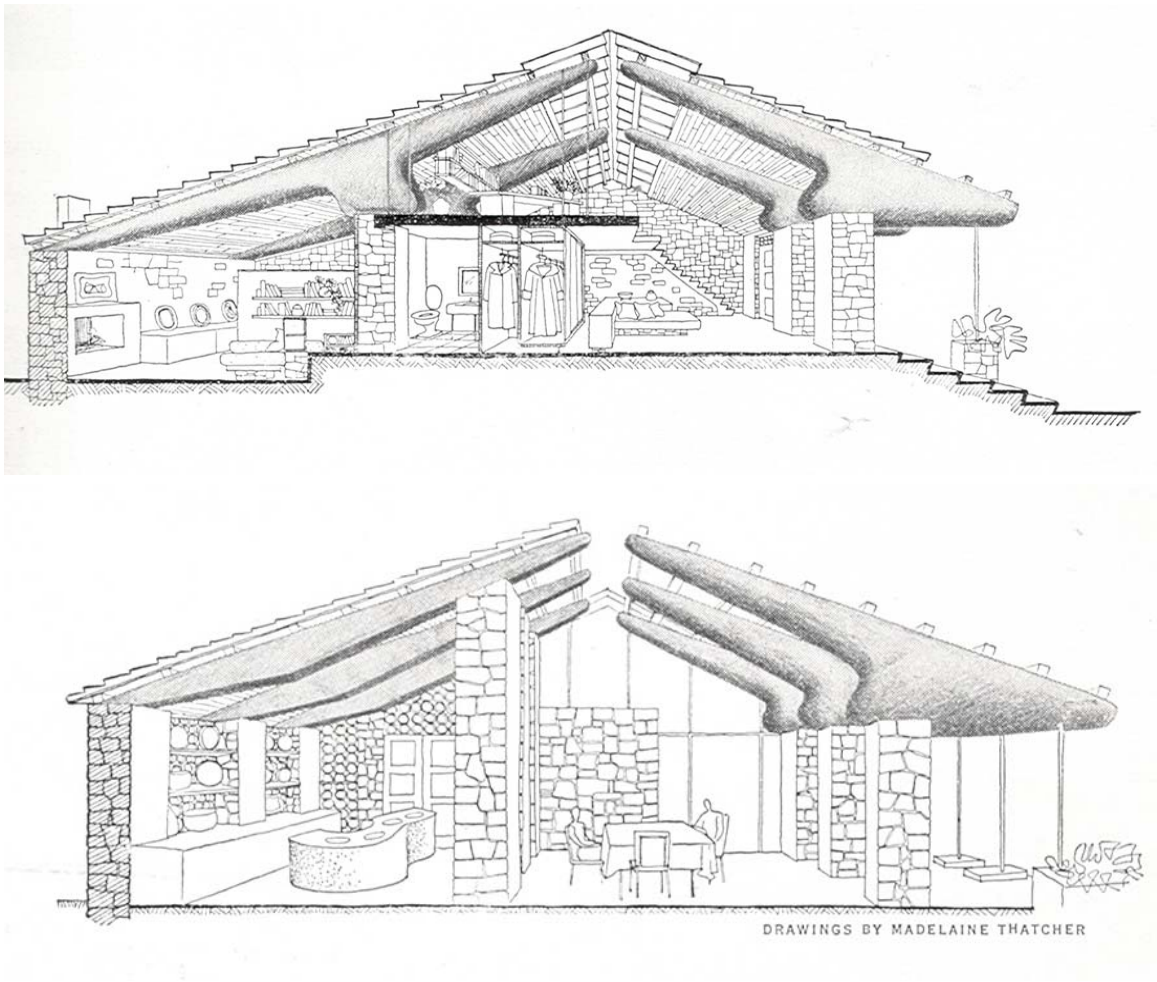


Fig. 4.21 Anshen & Allen, Silverstone House, Mexico, 1949. Rendering of structural system.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1951.

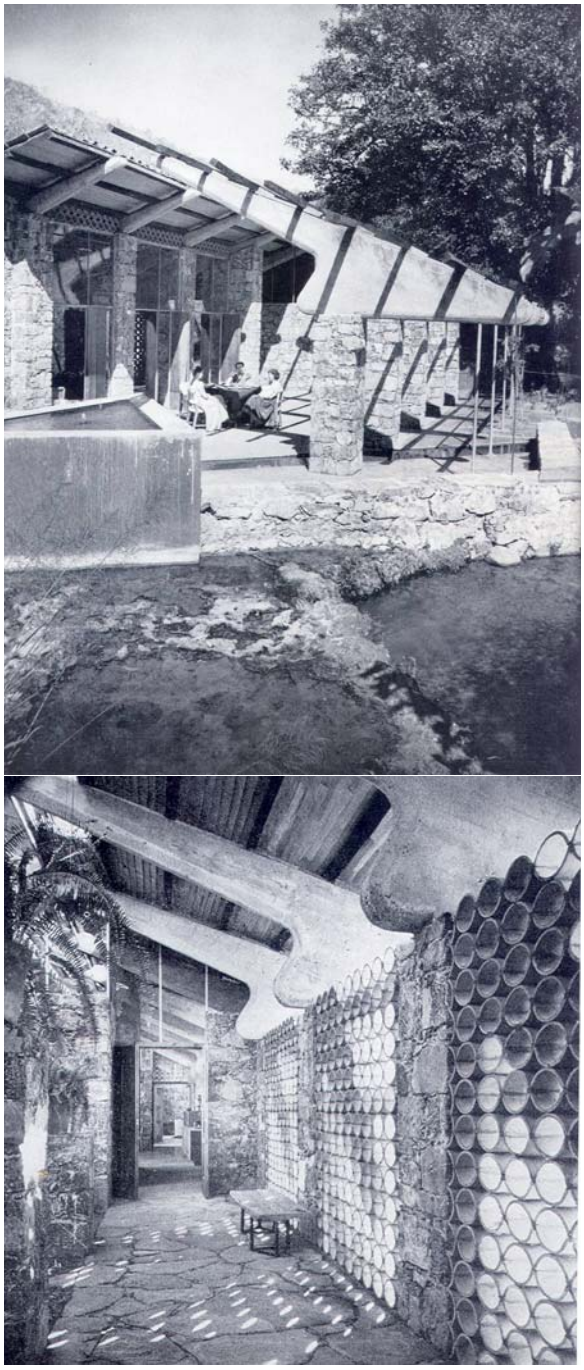

Fig. 4.22 Anshen & Allen, Silverstone House, Mexico, 1949.
top: screened wall; bottom, pictured: Terrace with Elizabeth Gordon, far left, ca. 1950.
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1951.

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# THE THREAT TO THE NEXT AMERICA

By Elizabeth Gordon, *Editor*

I have decided to speak up.

In this issue, devoted to the wonderful possibilities for the better life in the Next America, I must also point out to you what I consider to be the threat to our achieving the *greater good* which is clearly possible for us, if we do not lose our sense of direction and independence.

What I want to tell you about has never been put into print by us or any other publication, to my knowledge. Your first reactions will be amazement, disbelief, and shock. You will say "It can't happen here!"

But hear me out. You may discover why you strongly dislike some of the so-called modern things you see. You may suddenly understand why you instinctively reject designs that are called "modernistic." For you are right. It's your common sense speaking. For these things are bad—bad in more ways than in their lack of beauty alone.

Here is the story, in its bluntest terms.

**There is a well-established movement, in modern architecture, decorating, and furnishings, which is promoting the mystical idea that "less is more."** Year after year, this idea has been hammered home by some museums, some professional magazines for architects and decorators, some architectural schools, and some designers.

They are all trying to sell the idea that "less is more," both as a criterion for design, and as a basis for judgment of the good life. **They are promoting unlivability, stripped-down emptiness, lack of storage space and therefore lack of possessions.**

They are praising designs that are unscientific, irrational and uneconomical—illogical things like whole walls of unshaded glass on the west, which cause you to fry in the summer, thus misusing one of our finest new materials. Or tricks like putting heavy buildings up on thin, delicate stilts—even though they cost more and instinctively worry the eye. Or cantilevering things that don't need to be cantilevered, making them cost more, too. A strong taint of anti-reason runs through all of their houses and furnishings.

No wonder you feel uneasy and repelled!

They are trying to convince you that you can appreciate beauty only if you suffer—because they say beauty and comfort are incompatible.

They are trying to get you to accept their idea of beauty and form as the measure of all things, *regardless* of whether they work, what they do to you, or what they cost.

They are a self-chosen elite who are trying to tell us what we should like and how we should live. And these arbiters have such a narrow, often ignorant, conception of the good life that only non-human, low-performance things get their stamp of approval. **These arbiters make such a consistent attack on comfort, convenience, and functional values that it becomes, in reality, an attack on reason itself.**

"Incredible!" you say. "Nobody could seriously sell such nonsense."

My considered answer is this. Though it *is* incredible, some people *are* taking such nonsense seriously. They take it seriously because this propaganda comes from highly placed individuals and highly respected institutions. Therein lies the danger.

For if we can be sold on accepting dictators in matters of taste and how our homes are to be ordered, our minds are certainly well prepared to accept dictators in other departments of life. The undermining of people's confidence is the beginning of the end.

Break people's confidence in reason and their own common sense and they are on the way to attaching themselves to a leader, a mass movement, or any sort of authority beyond themselves. Nothing better explains periods of mass hysteria or various forms of social idiocy than the collapse of reason, the often deliberate result of an attack on people's self-confidence.

If people don't trust themselves and their own judgment, then they turn helplessly to leaders, good or bad. And they can only recover the good, sensible life when they recover their senses and discover again that, by and large, the ultimate hope for mankind is the application of reason to the world around us. This rediscovery leads individuals to their own declaration of independence against the frauds, the over-publicized phonies, the bullying tactics of the self-chosen elite who would dictate not only taste but a whole way of life.

So, you see, this well-developed movement has social implications, because it affects the heart of our society —the home. Beyond the nonsense of trying to make us want to give up our technical aids and conveniences for what is *supposed* to be a better and more serene life, there is a social threat of regimentation and total control. **For if the mind of man can be manipulated in one great phase of life to be made willing to accept less, it would be possible to go on and get him to accept less in all phases of life.**

I can hear you say: "How can people collaborate for their own discomfort and frustration?"

Believe it or not, some people do, because their own self-confidence has been shaken. Not very many, fortunately, but enough so that I can clearly see the aberration growing. (*Please turn the page*)



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*Something is rotten in the state of design—and it is spoiling some of our best efforts in modern living. After watching it for several years, after meeting it with silence, House Beautiful has decided to speak out and appeal to your common sense, because it is common sense that is mostly under attack. Two ways of life stretch before us. One leads to the richness of variety, to comfort and beauty. The other, the one we want fully to expose to you, retreats to poverty and unlivability. Worst of all, it contains a threat of cultural dictatorship*

Fig. 5.1 Elizabeth Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America."
Source: *House Beautiful* April 1953

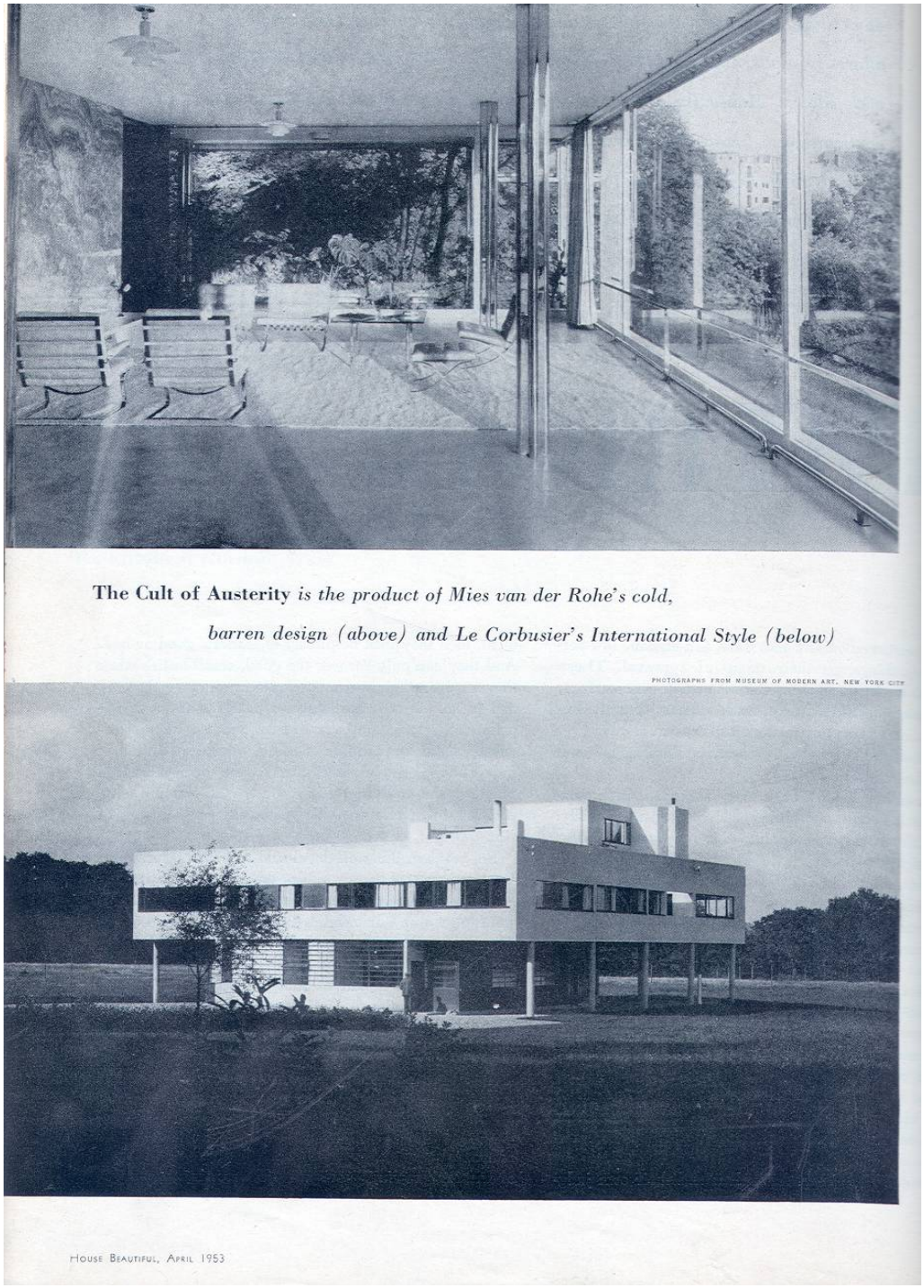
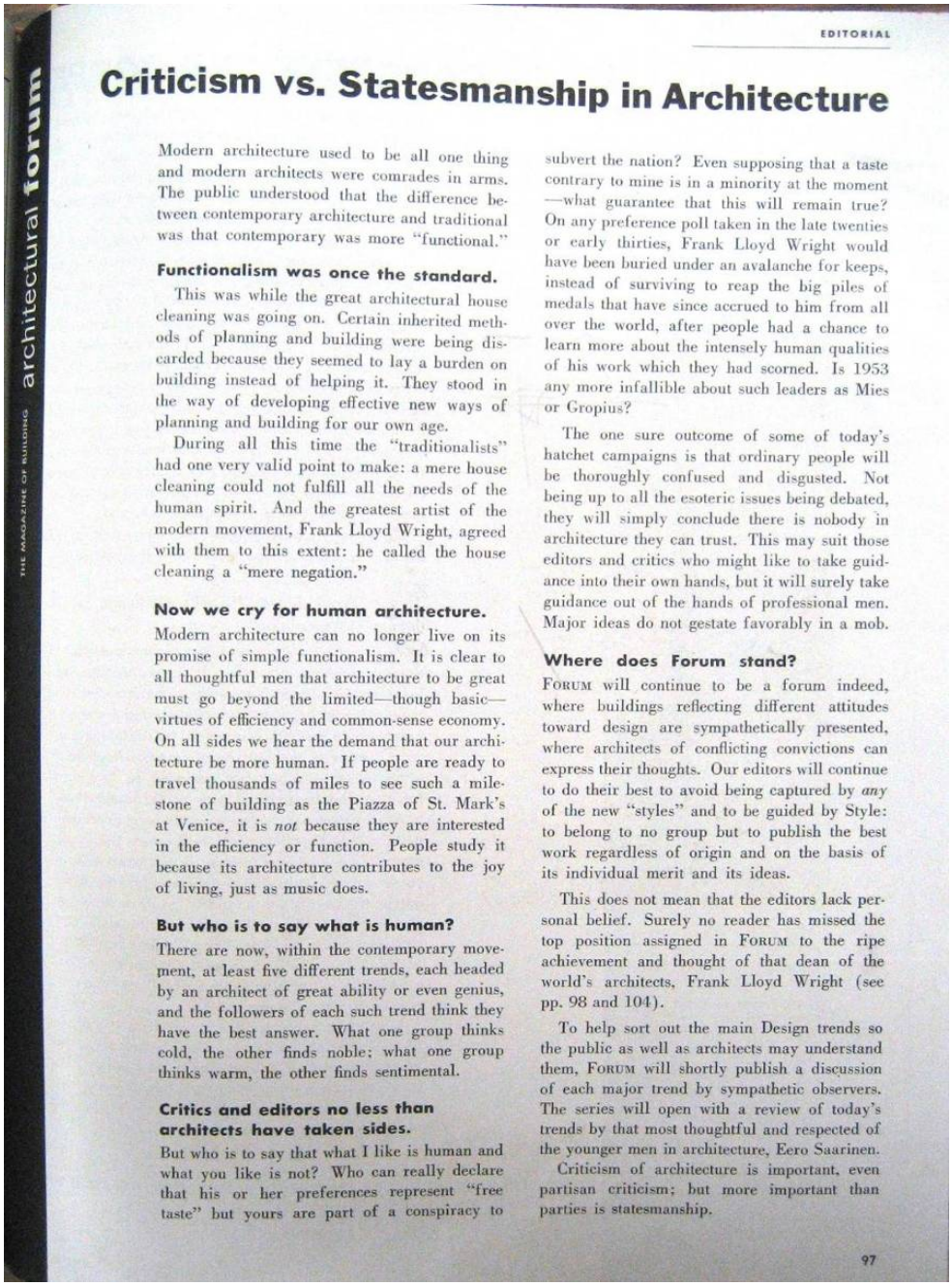



Fig. 5.2 "Cult of Austerity:" Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion, Barcelona, 1929; and Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, 1929.
Source: Layout adapted from *House Beautiful* April 1953


Fig. 5.3 Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois, 1946-51; and and Philip Johnson, Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut, 1949.





THE MAGAZINE OF BUILDING architectural forum

# Criticism vs. Statesmanship in Architecture

Modern architecture used to be all one thing and modern architects were comrades in arms. The public understood that the difference between contemporary architecture and traditional was that contemporary was more "functional."

**Functionalism was once the standard.**

This was while the great architectural house cleaning was going on. Certain inherited methods of planning and building were being discarded because they seemed to lay a burden on building instead of helping it. They stood in the way of developing effective new ways of planning and building for our own age.

During all this time the "traditionalists" had one very valid point to make: a mere house cleaning could not fulfill all the needs of the human spirit. And the greatest artist of the modern movement, Frank Lloyd Wright, agreed with them to this extent: he called the house cleaning a "mere negation."

**Now we cry for human architecture.**

Modern architecture can no longer live on its promise of simple functionalism. It is clear to all thoughtful men that architecture to be great must go beyond the limited—though basic—virtues of efficiency and common-sense economy. On all sides we hear the demand that our architecture be more human. If people are ready to travel thousands of miles to see such a milestone of building as the Piazza of St. Mark's at Venice, it is *not* because they are interested in the efficiency or function. People study it because its architecture contributes to the joy of living, just as music does.

**But who is to say what is human?**

There are now, within the contemporary movement, at least five different trends, each headed by an architect of great ability or even genius, and the followers of each such trend think they have the best answer. What one group thinks cold, the other finds noble; what one group thinks warm, the other finds sentimental.

**Critics and editors no less than architects have taken sides.**

But who is to say that what I like is human and what you like is not? Who can really declare that his or her preferences represent "free taste" but yours are part of a conspiracy to subvert the nation? Even supposing that a taste contrary to mine is in a minority at the moment —what guarantee that this will remain true? On any preference poll taken in the late twenties or early thirties, Frank Lloyd Wright would have been buried under an avalanche for keeps, instead of surviving to reap the big piles of medals that have since accrued to him from all over the world, after people had a chance to learn more about the intensely human qualities of his work which they had scorned. Is 1953 any more infallible about such leaders as Mies or Gropius?

The one sure outcome of some of today's hatchet campaigns is that ordinary people will be thoroughly confused and disgusted. Not being up to all the esoteric issues being debated, they will simply conclude there is nobody in architecture they can trust. This may suit those editors and critics who might like to take guidance into their own hands, but it will surely take guidance out of the hands of professional men. Major ideas do not gestate favorably in a mob.

**Where does Forum stand?**

FORUM will continue to be a forum indeed, where buildings reflecting different attitudes toward design are sympathetically presented, where architects of conflicting convictions can express their thoughts. Our editors will continue to do their best to avoid being captured by *any* of the new "styles" and to be guided by Style: to belong to no group but to publish the best work regardless of origin and on the basis of its individual merit and its ideas.

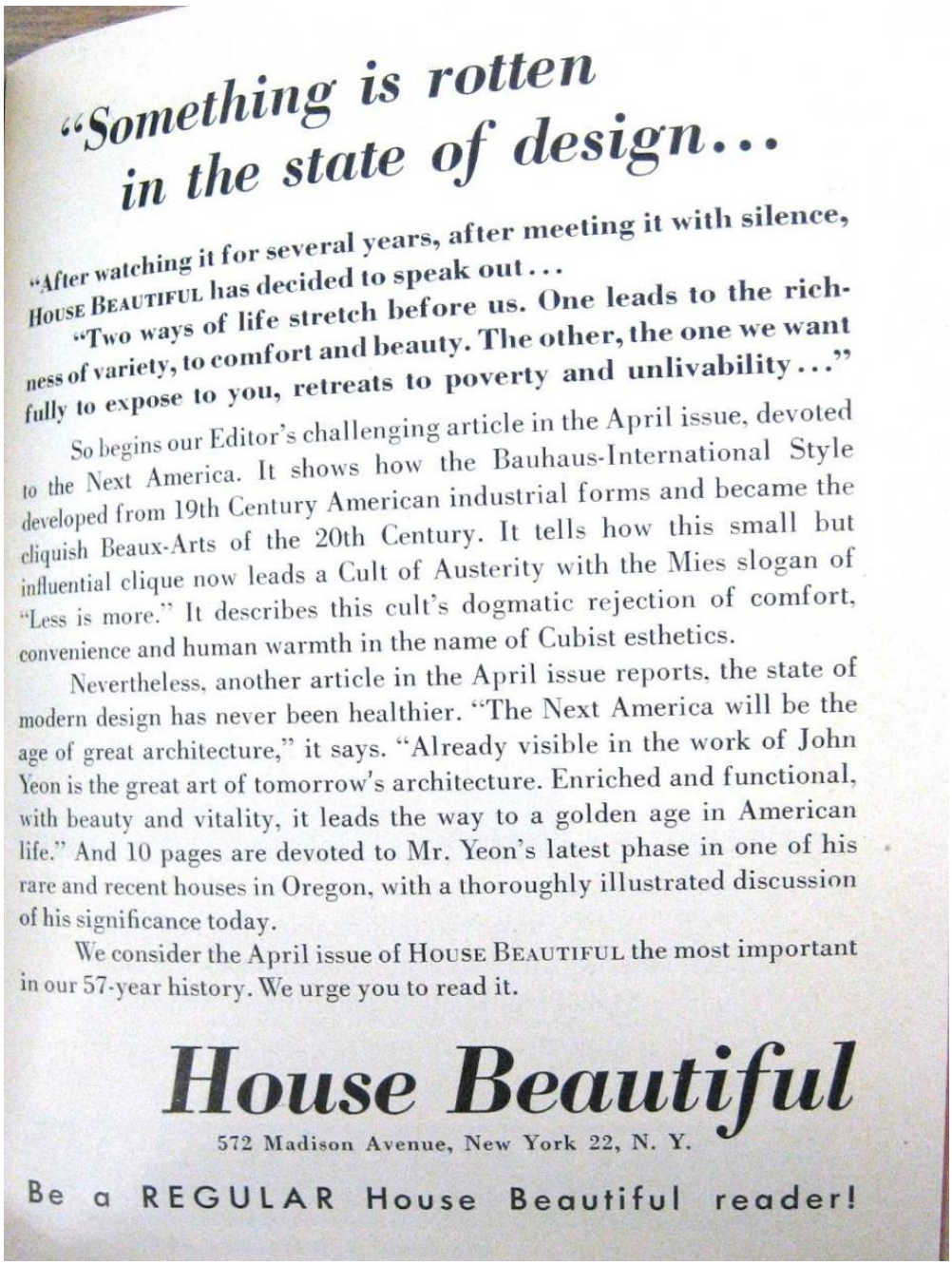
This does not mean that the editors lack personal belief. Surely no reader has missed the top position assigned in FORUM to the ripe achievement and thought of that dean of the world's architects, Frank Lloyd Wright (see pp. 98 and 104).

To help sort out the main Design trends so the public as well as architects may understand them, FORUM will shortly publish a discussion of each major trend by sympathetic observers. The series will open with a review of today's trends by that most thoughtful and respected of the younger men in architecture, Eero Saarinen.

Criticism of architecture is important, even partisan criticism; but more important than parties is statesmanship.



Fig. 5.4 Editorial, "Criticism vs. Statesmanship in Architecture," *Architectural Forum*, 1953
Source: *Architectural Forum*, 1953.



## *"Something is rotten in the state of design..."*

**"After watching it for several years, after meeting it with silence, HOUSE BEAUTIFUL has decided to speak out...**

**"Two ways of life stretch before us. One leads to the richness of variety, to comfort and beauty. The other, the one we want fully to expose to you, retreats to poverty and unlivability..."**

So begins our Editor's challenging article in the April issue, devoted to the Next America. It shows how the Bauhaus-International Style developed from 19th Century American industrial forms and became the cliquish Beaux-Arts of the 20th Century. It tells how this small but influential clique now leads a Cult of Austerity with the Mies slogan of "Less is more." It describes this cult's dogmatic rejection of comfort, convenience and human warmth in the name of Cubist esthetics.

Nevertheless, another article in the April issue reports, the state of modern design has never been healthier. "The Next America will be the age of great architecture," it says. "Already visible in the work of John Yeon is the great art of tomorrow's architecture. Enriched and functional, with beauty and vitality, it leads the way to a golden age in American life." And 10 pages are devoted to Mr. Yeon's latest phase in one of his rare and recent houses in Oregon, with a thoroughly illustrated discussion of his significance today.

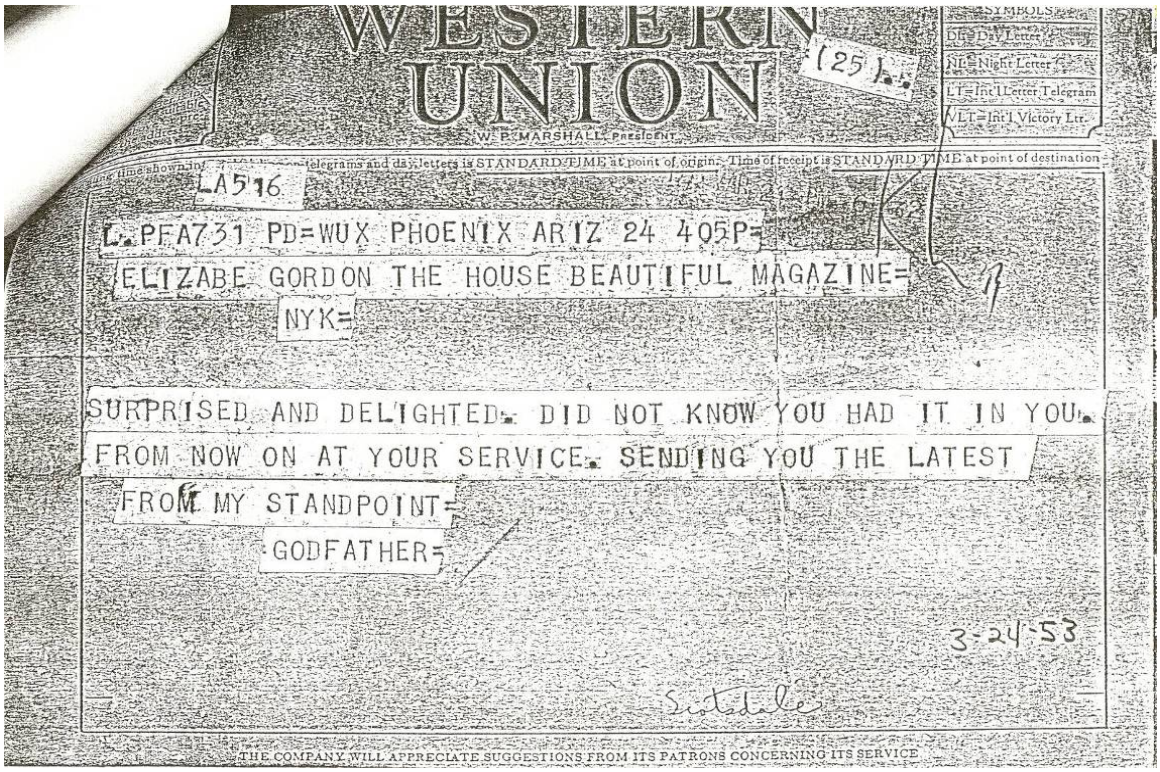
We consider the April issue of HOUSE BEAUTIFUL the most important in our 57-year history. We urge you to read it.

**House Beautiful**

572 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

Be a REGULAR House Beautiful reader!

Fig. 5.5 Advertisements in *Journal of The AIA*
Source: *Journal of The AIA*, April 1953


WESTERN UNION

(25)

W. P. MARSHALL, president

SYMBOLS
DL = Day Letter
NL = Night Letter
LT = Int'l Letter Telegram
VLT = Int'l Victory Ltr.

The time shown in telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

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3-24-53

Scottsdale

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Fig. 5.6 Telegram to Elizabeth Gordon, from Godfather (Frank Lloyd Wright). 1953
Source: John deKoven Hill Papers, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation


Fig. 5.7 Elizabeth Gordon and Frank Lloyd Wright
Source: Dianne Maddex, *Frank Lloyd Wright's House Beautiful* (2000).

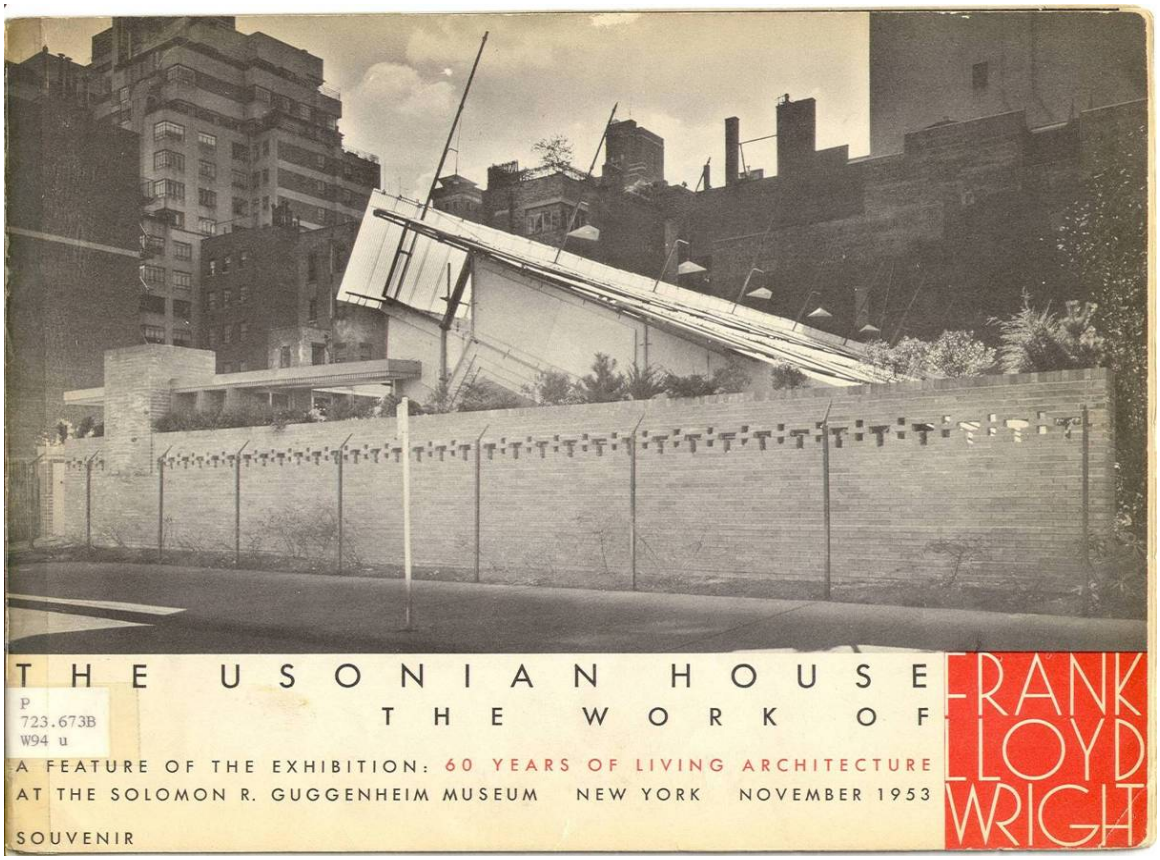
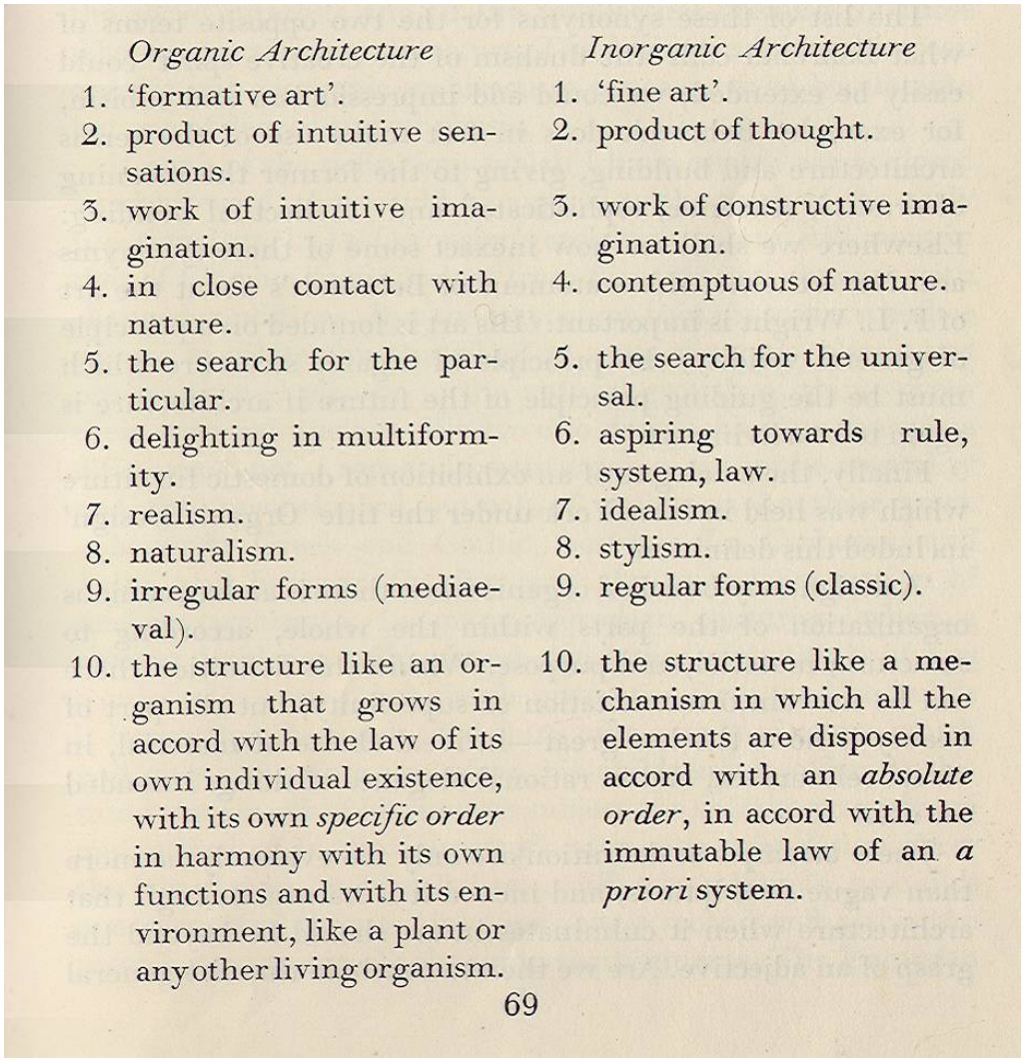




Fig. 6.1 “The Usonian House,” from *60 Years of Living Architecture*
Source: “The Usonian House,” 1953



| *Organic Architecture* | *Inorganic Architecture* |
|---|---|
| 1. 'formative art'. | 1. 'fine art'. |
| 2. product of intuitive sensations. | 2. product of thought. |
| 3. work of intuitive imagination. | 3. work of constructive imagination. |
| 4. in close contact with nature. | 4. contemptuous of nature. |
| 5. the search for the particular. | 5. the search for the universal. |
| 6. delighting in multiformity. | 6. aspiring towards rule, system, law. |
| 7. realism. | 7. idealism. |
| 8. naturalism. | 8. stylism. |
| 9. irregular forms (mediaeval). | 9. regular forms (classic). |
| 10. the structure like an organism that grows in accord with the law of its own individual existence, with its own *specific order* in harmony with its own functions and with its environment, like a plant or any other living organism. | 10. the structure like a mechanism in which all the elements are disposed in accord with an *absolute order*, in accord with the immutable law of an *a priori* system. |

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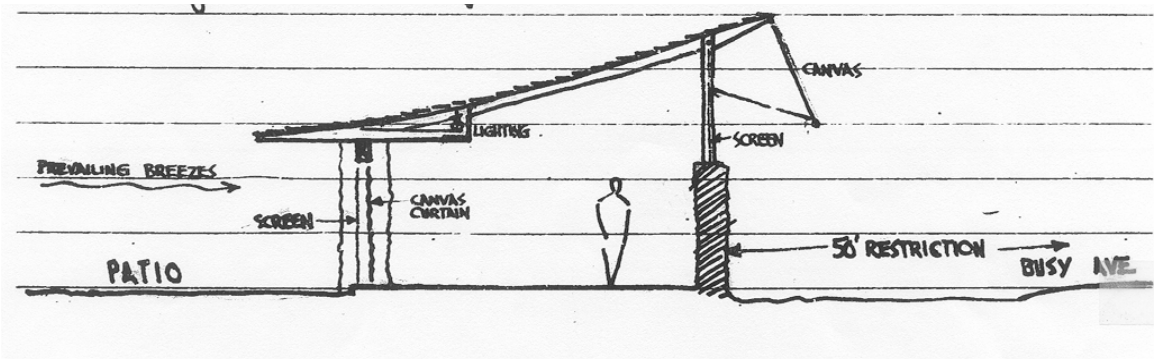
Fig. 6.2 Organic vs. Inorganic, chart by Bruno Zevi
Source: Bruno Zevi, *Toward an Organic Architecture* (1950)


Fig. 6.3 Alfred Browning Parker, ca 1965
Source: Alfred Browning Parker, *You and Architecture* (1965)


Fig. 6.4 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953. Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 6.5 Frank Lloyd Wright, on the cover of *Architectural Forum* and *TIME*
Source: covers *Architectural Forum* 1938*; TIME* 1938



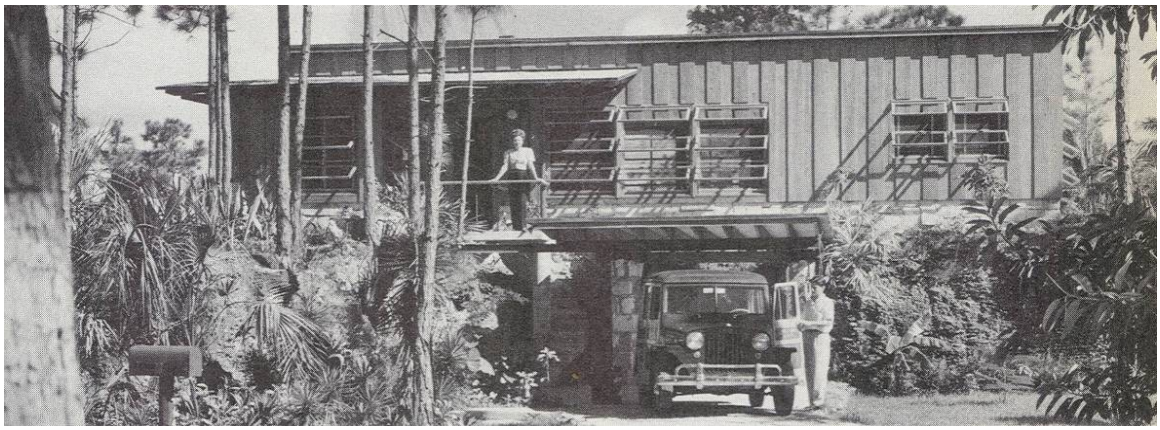
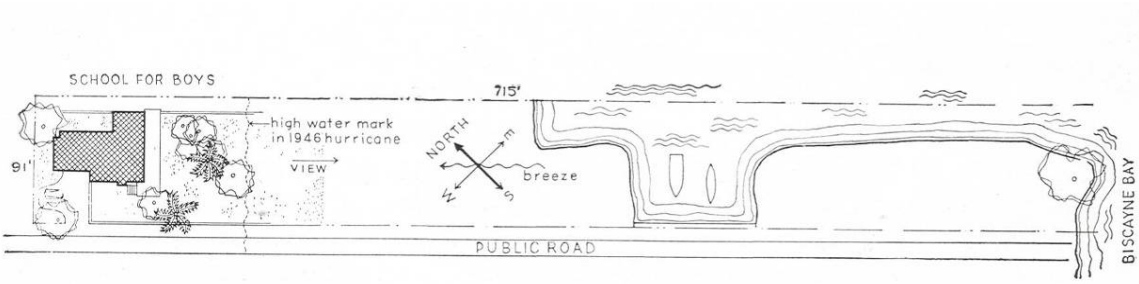



Fig. 6.6 Alfred Browning Parker House #1, Coconut Grove, Florida, 1946
Source: Alfred Browning Parker Papers, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville


Fig. 6.7  Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship


Fig. 6.8:  Alfred Browning Parker and family, at Pace Setter 1954. photographed 1953.
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives




"Prescription for a Modern House:

"First, a good site. Pick one at the most difficult spot—pick a site no one wants—but pick one that has features making for character: trees, individuality, a fault of some kind in the realtor mind.

Fig. 6.9 Pace Setter 1954, site plan; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Prescription for a Modern House."
Source: *House Beautiful* 1953

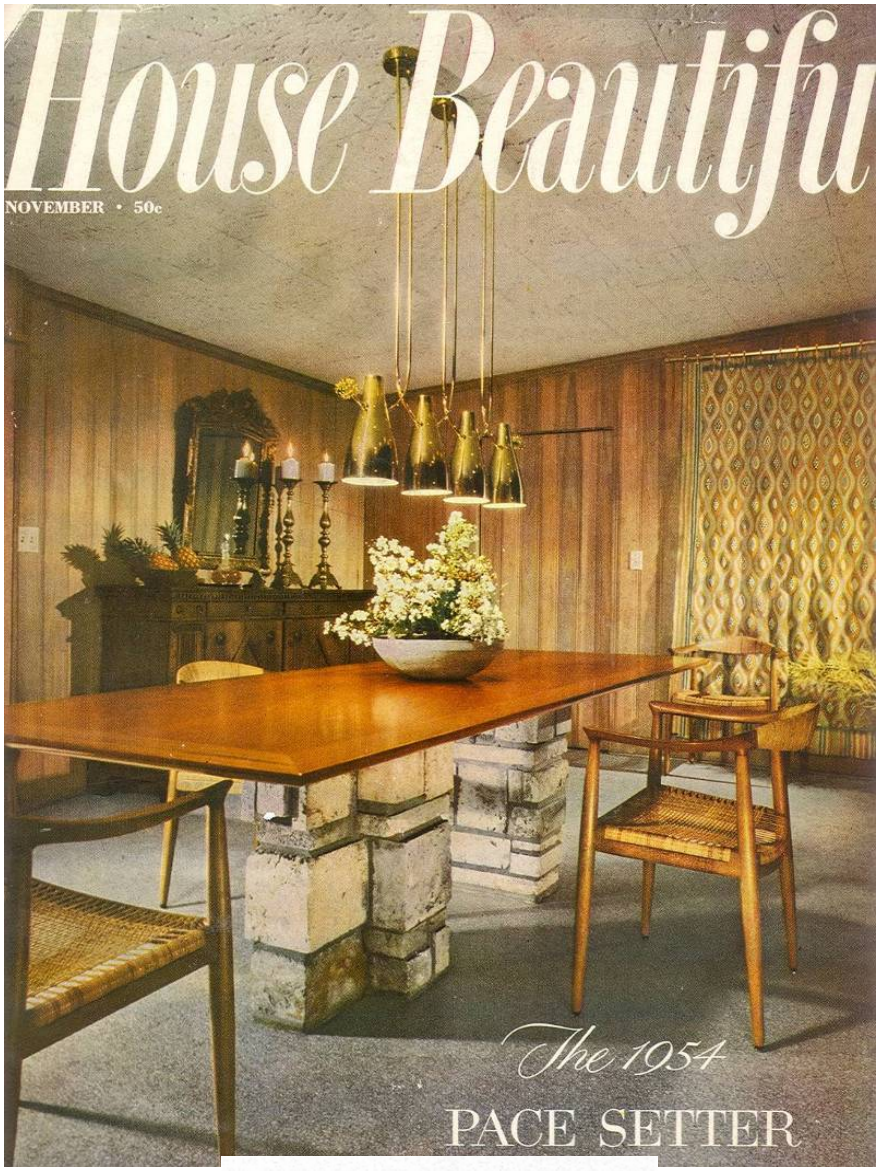



Fig. 6.10 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953; *House Beautiful* Pace Setter Logo, with Parker house featured.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1953


Fig. 6.11 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953.
Architecture = Building + Siting + Landscape + Furnishings
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 6.12 Pace Setter 1954, under construction, ca 1950. Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1953.


Fig. 6.13  Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953.
Pictured: Parker on cantilevered roof, ca 1953.
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 6.14 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953.
Dining room (foreground) and living area.
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 6.15 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953. Pace Setter patterns for bed sheets, coverlet, rug (by Mariska Karasz), towels. Source: *House Beautiful* 1953; Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 6.16 Pace Setter 1954, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1953. Pace Setter patterns for rooftop suite, derived from cantilever form (top). Source: drawings from Parker Papers, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville; images Ezra Stoller Archives.

Fig. 7.1 Harwell Hamilton Harris
Source: Harwell Hamilton Harris Papers, the Alexander Architectural Archive, the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.


Fig. 7.2  Harwell Hamilton Harris, Havens House, Berkeley, 1941.
Source: Photo by Man Ray. Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.


Fig. 7.3 Harwell Hamilton Harris, Edward De Steiguer House, Pasadena, 1936.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.


Fig. 7.4 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

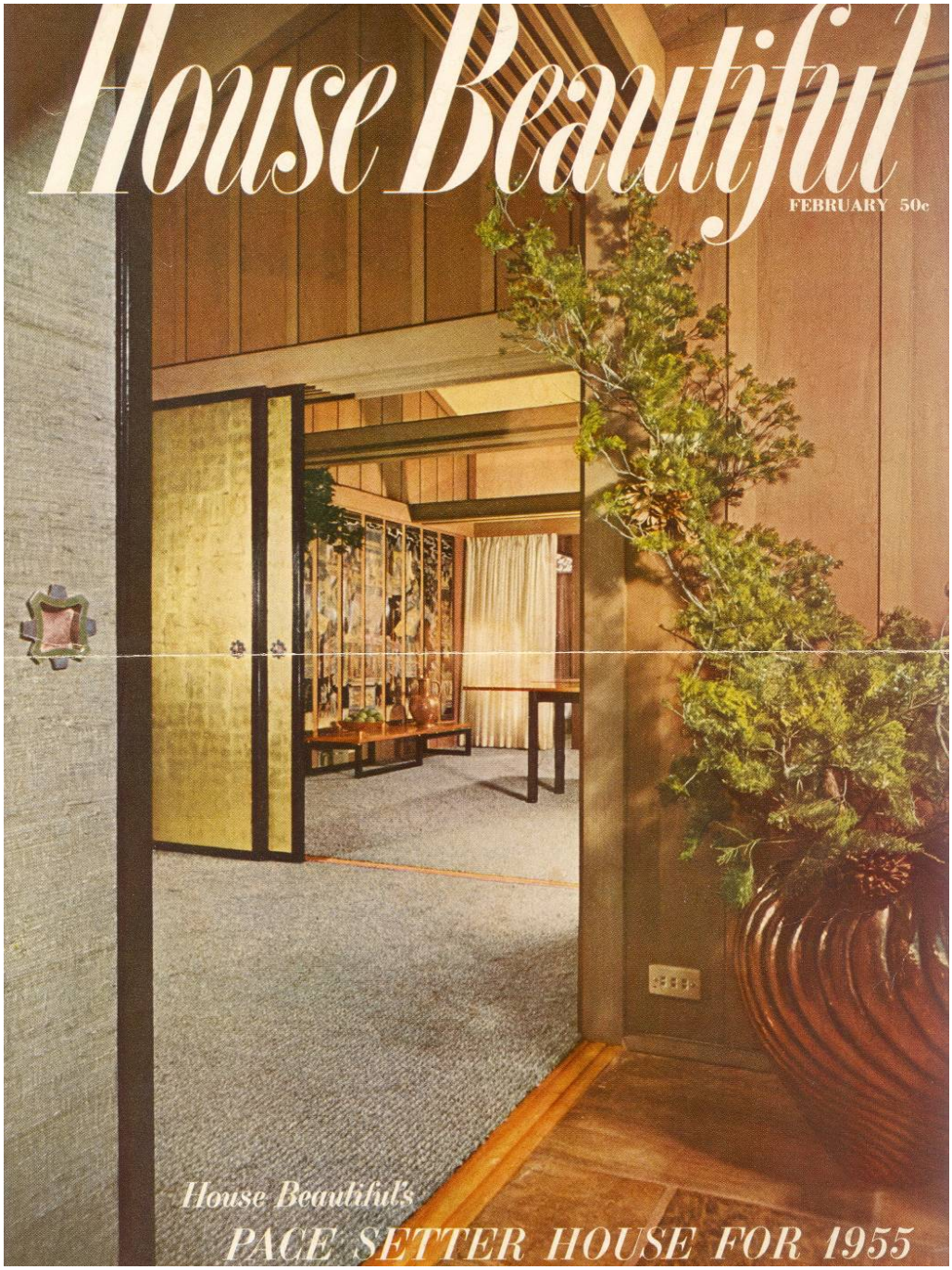
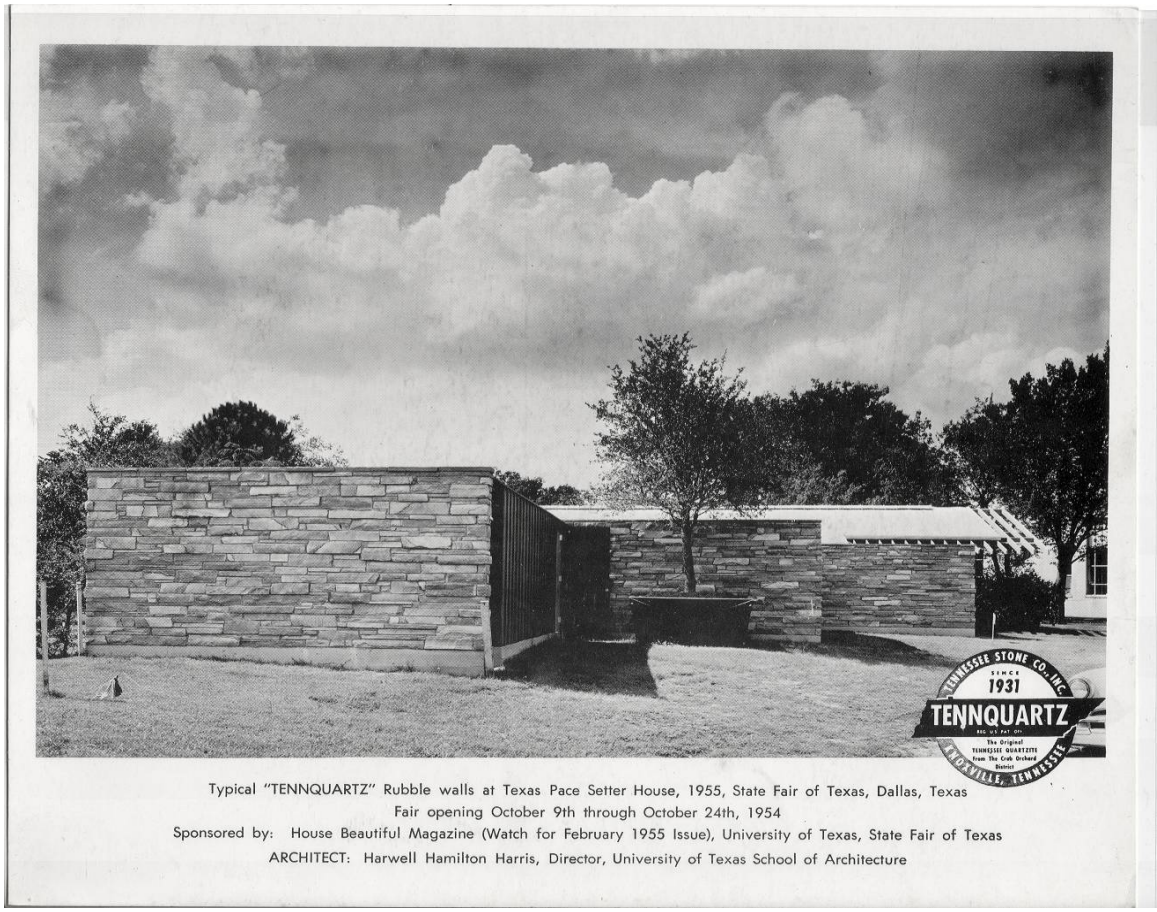



Fig. 7.5 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1955

Fig. 7.6 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.




Typical "TENNQUARTZ" Rubble walls at Texas Pace Setter House, 1955, State Fair of Texas, Dallas, Texas
Fair opening October 9th through October 24th, 1954
Sponsored by: House Beautiful Magazine (Watch for February 1955 Issue), University of Texas, State Fair of Texas
ARCHITECT: Harwell Hamilton Harris, Director, University of Texas School of Architecture

Fig. 7.7 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. Tennquartz Advertisement.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

The Magic
of
Southern Pine

You have parked your car in the ample space outside. You walk under the wide protecting eaves to the front door. You push it open and the Pace Setter for 1955 unfolds before you. Perhaps it bursts upon you, for the interior court has unexpected grandeur and beauty—truly a wonderland of wood. Your eye follows the rhythm of the rafters, and lingers, charmed by their warm rich color and its pleasant blending with the cool contained greenness of the enclosed garden. The rafters and beams are Southern Pine, lending strength to the structure and beauty to the scene.

Note how successfully the architect has created the impression of open, flowing spaces, of the indoors reaching out to include the air and breadth of the outdoors. To achieve this effect, he has fully exploited the most distinctive and valuable characteristics of Southern Pine. The dimensions of the rafters and beams, their size and shape, and the wide clear span, indicate his awareness of the physical strength of the wood, its nailholding power. And by exposing the structure, by applying just a slightly weathered stain, he has brought out Southern Pine's fine texture.

Fig. 7.8 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. Southern Pine Advertisement brochure.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

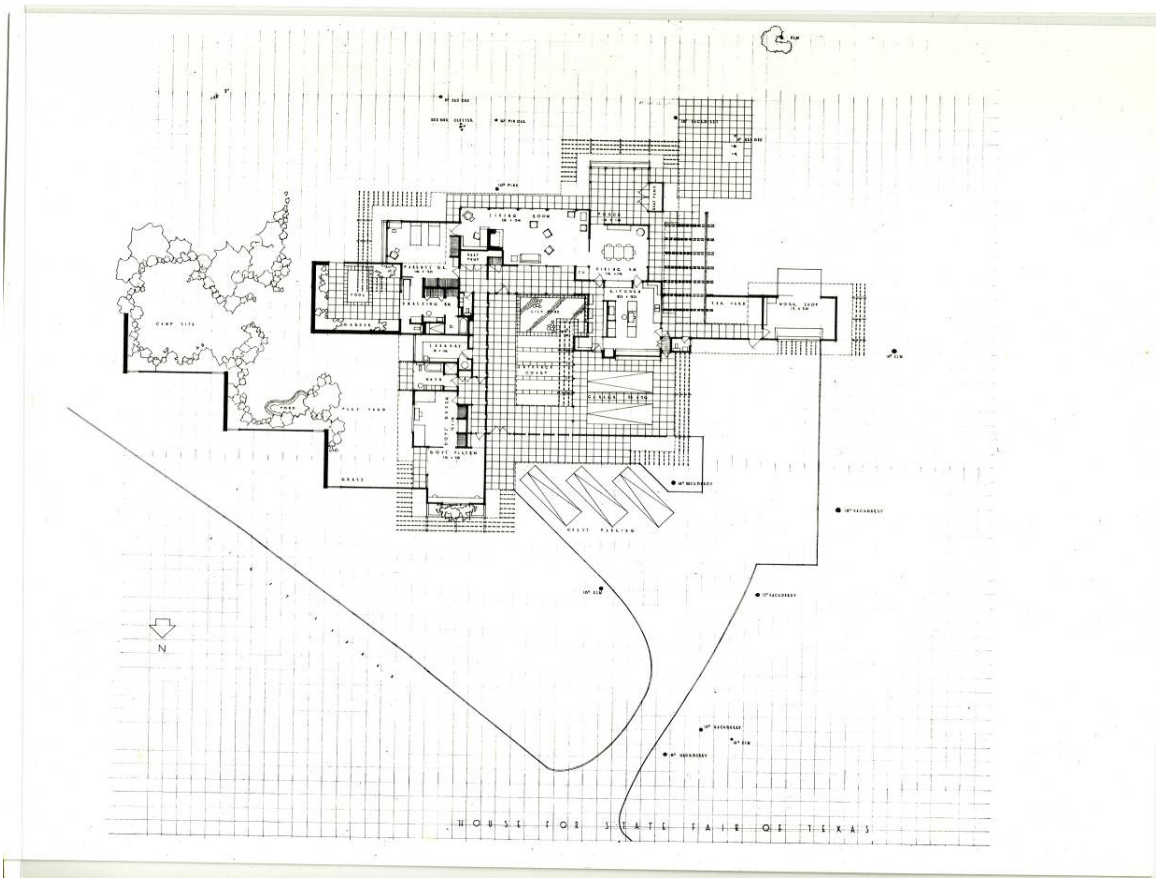



Fig. 7.9 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. plan.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

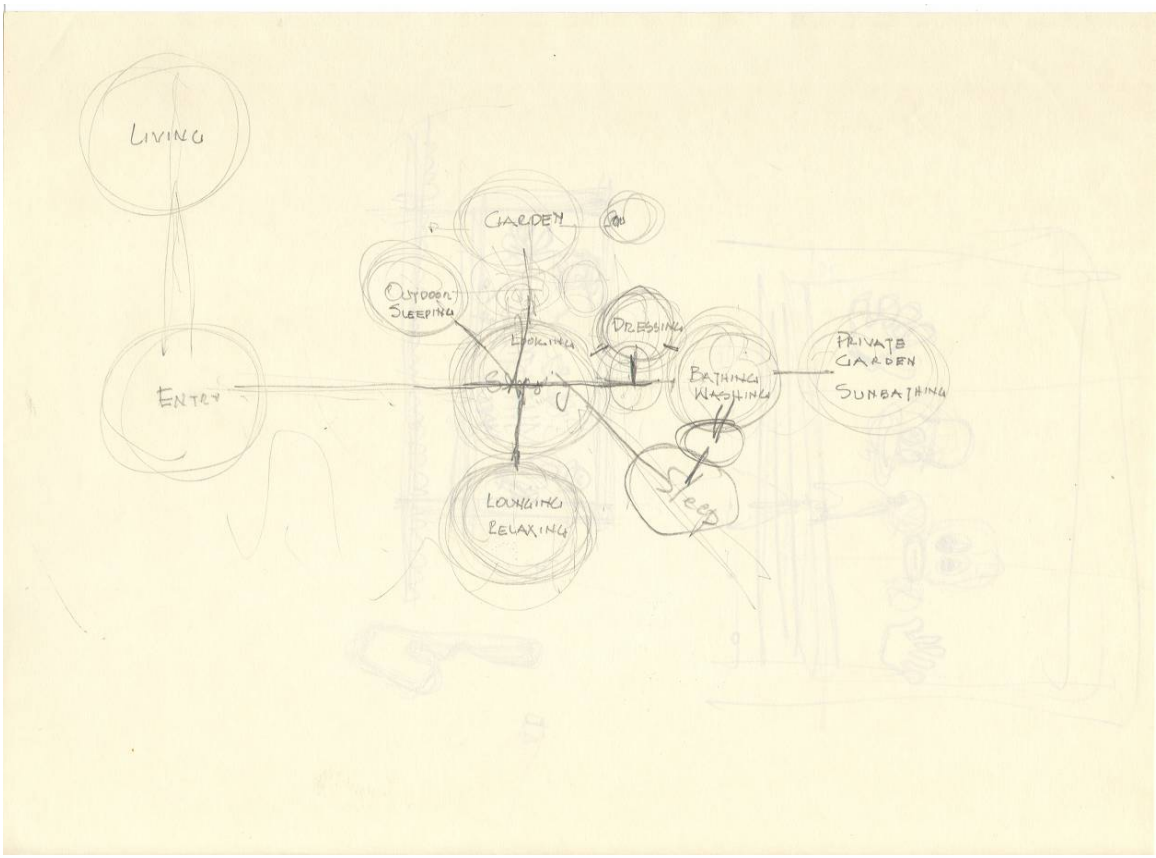



Fig. 7.10 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. The creative process for program and plan.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

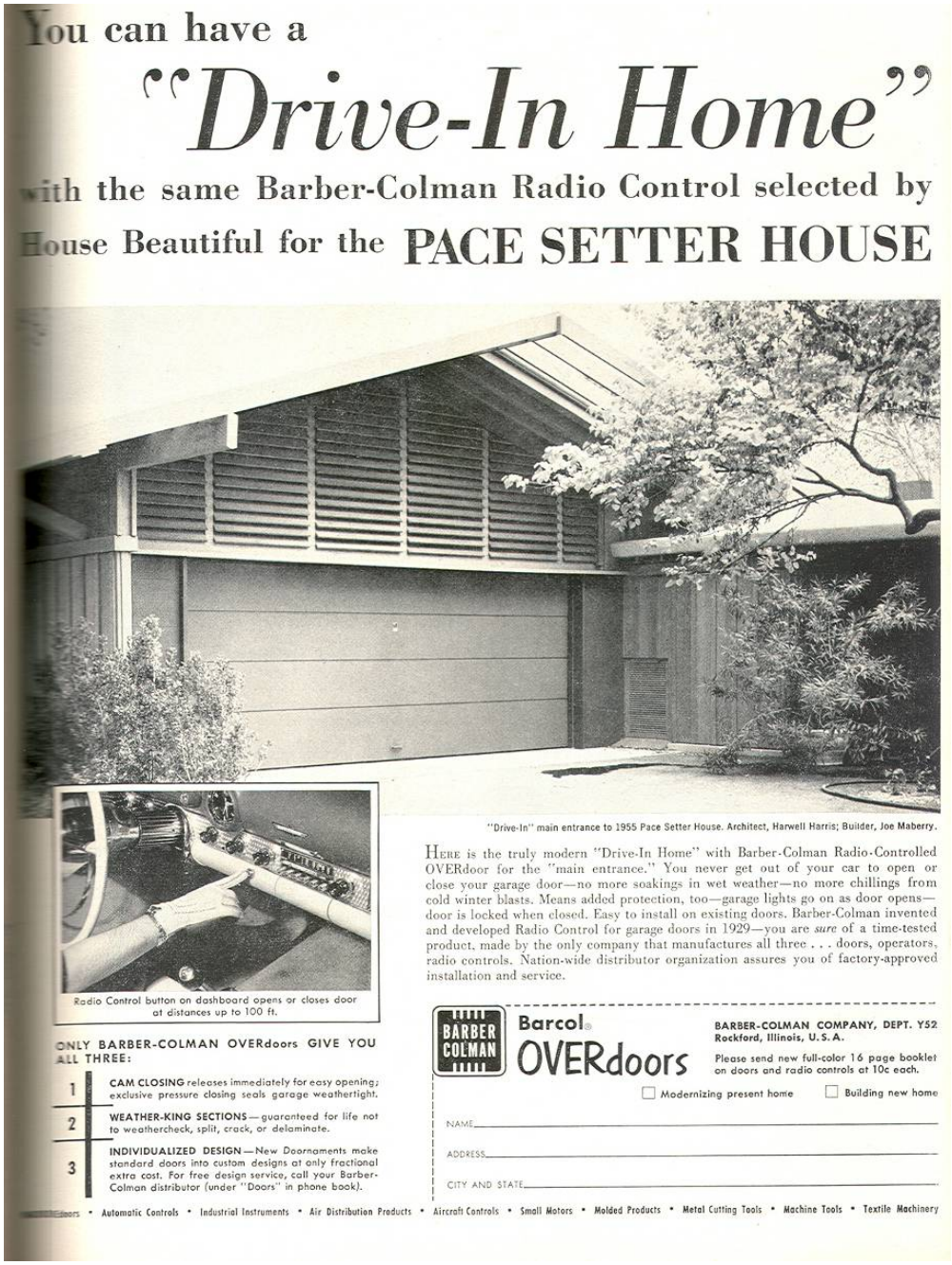



Fig. 7.11 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. Barber-Colman advertisement for the “Drive-In-Home.”
Pictured: Pace Setter 1955 garage
Source: *House Beautiful* 1955

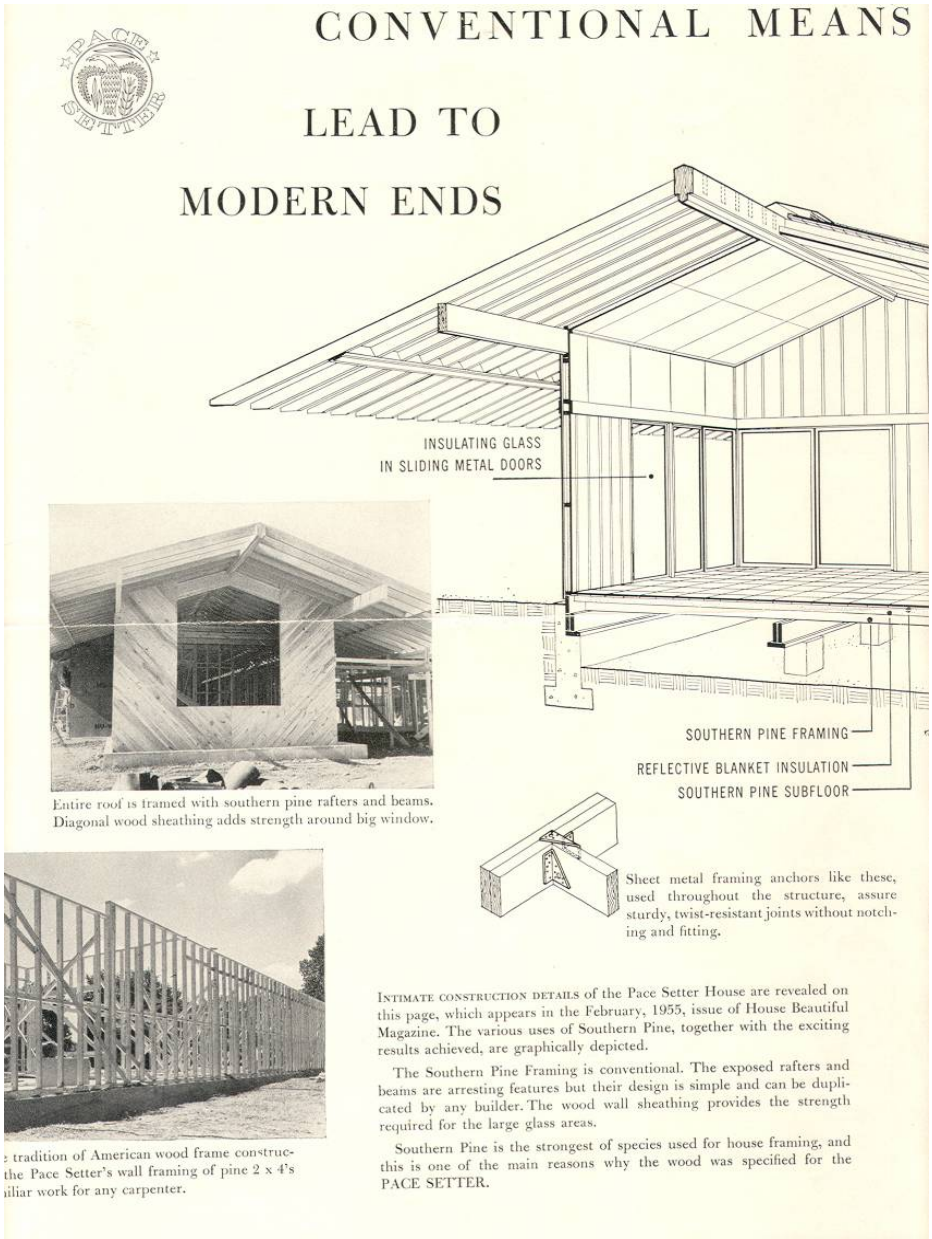



Fig. 7.12 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. Conventional framing.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1955.

Fig. 7.13 Pace Setter 1955, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dallas, 1955. Kitchen.
Source: Harris Papers, Alexander Archives, The University of Texas at Austin.

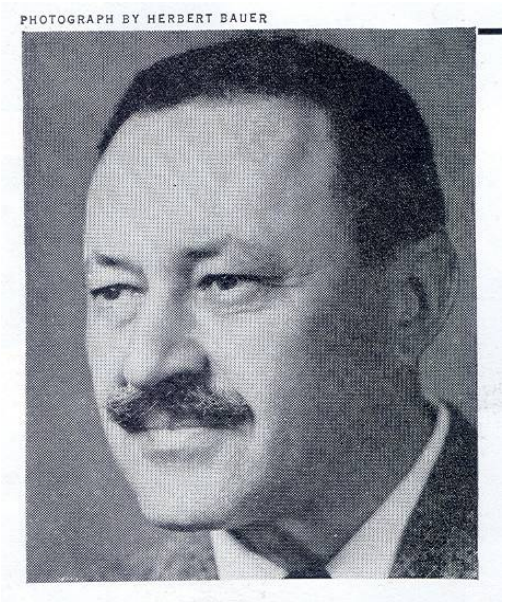



Fig. 7.14 Vladimir Ossipoff
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958

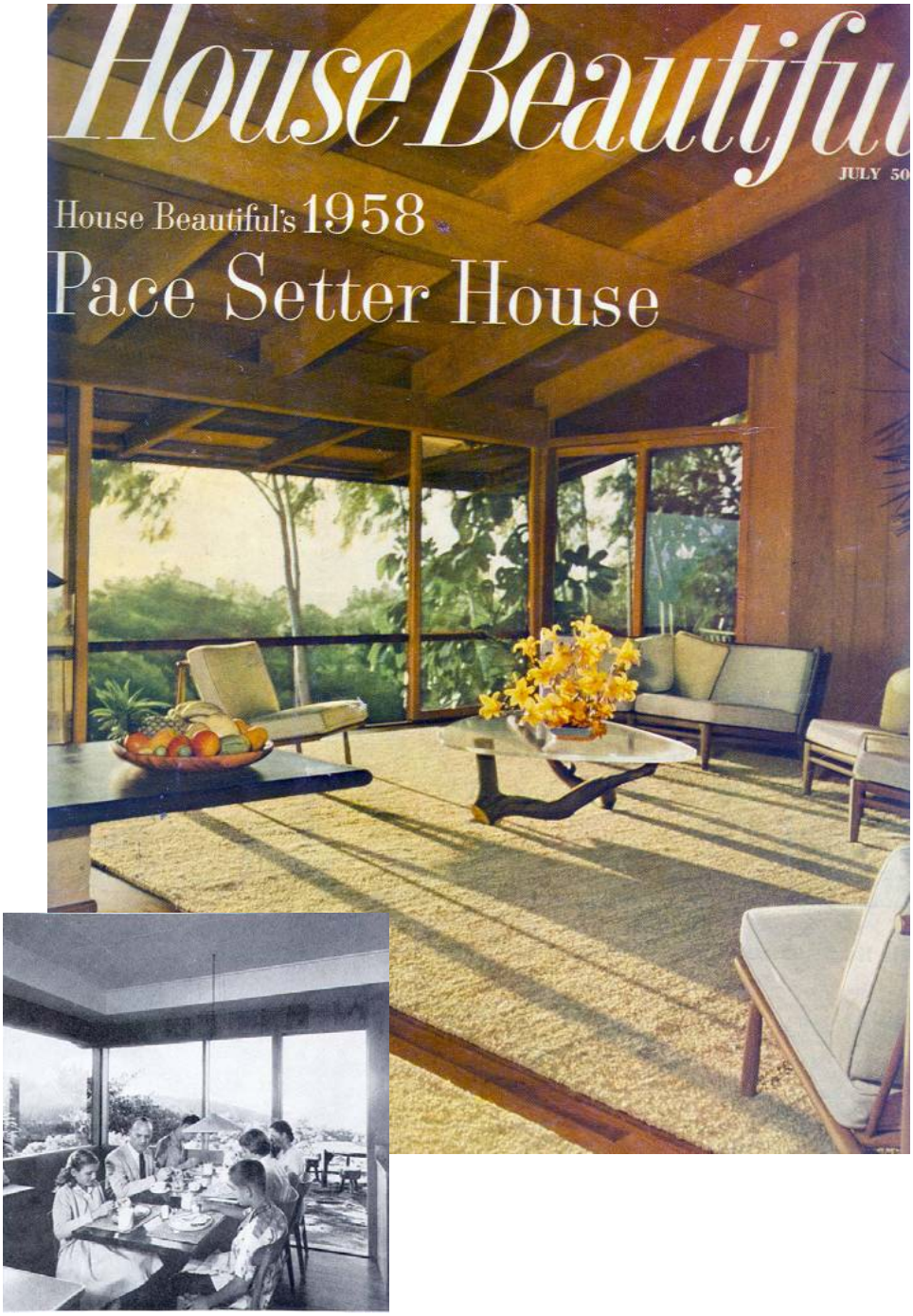



Fig. 7.15 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. Howard Liljestrand and family in Pace Setter kitchen (left).
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958

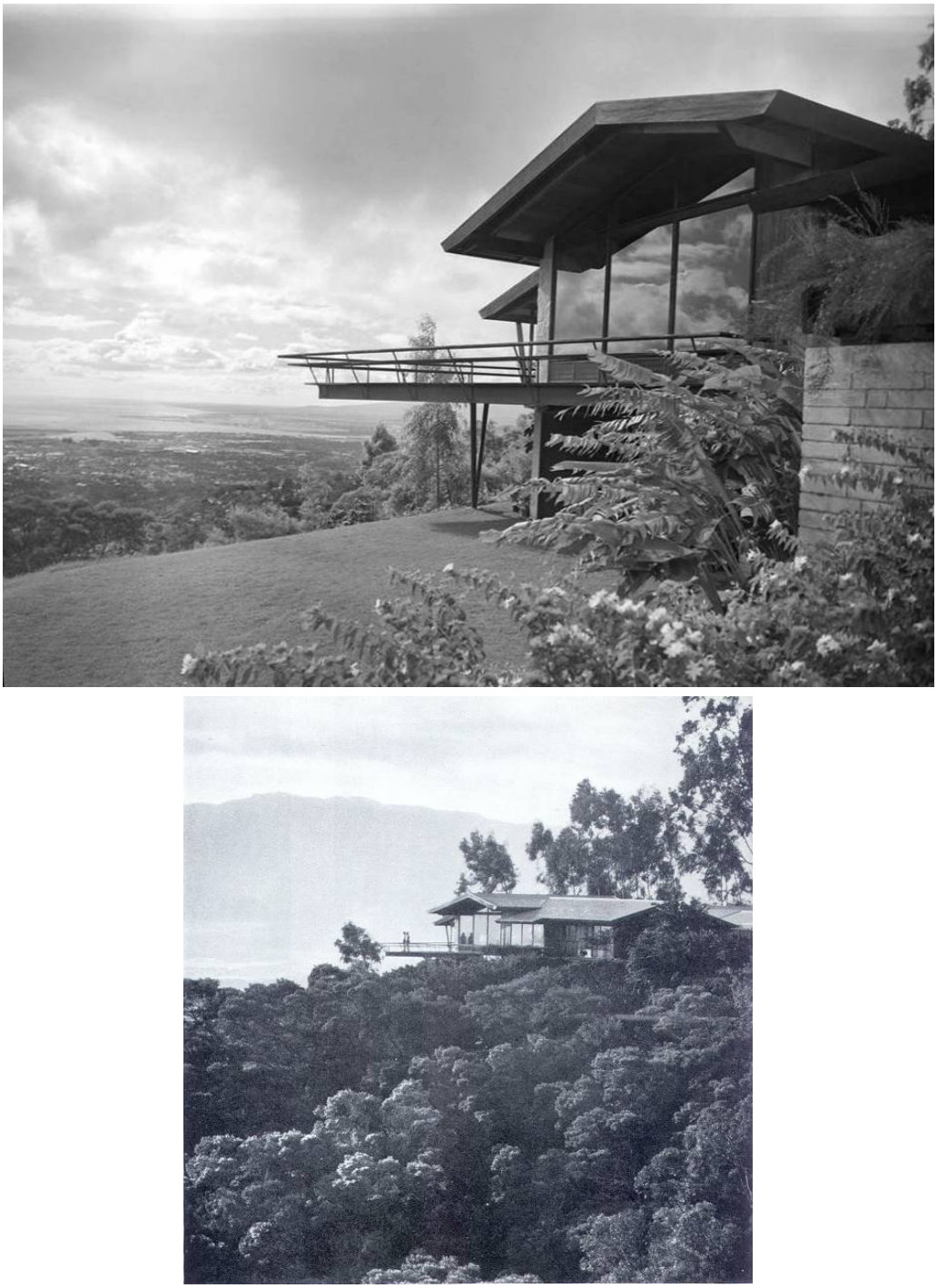
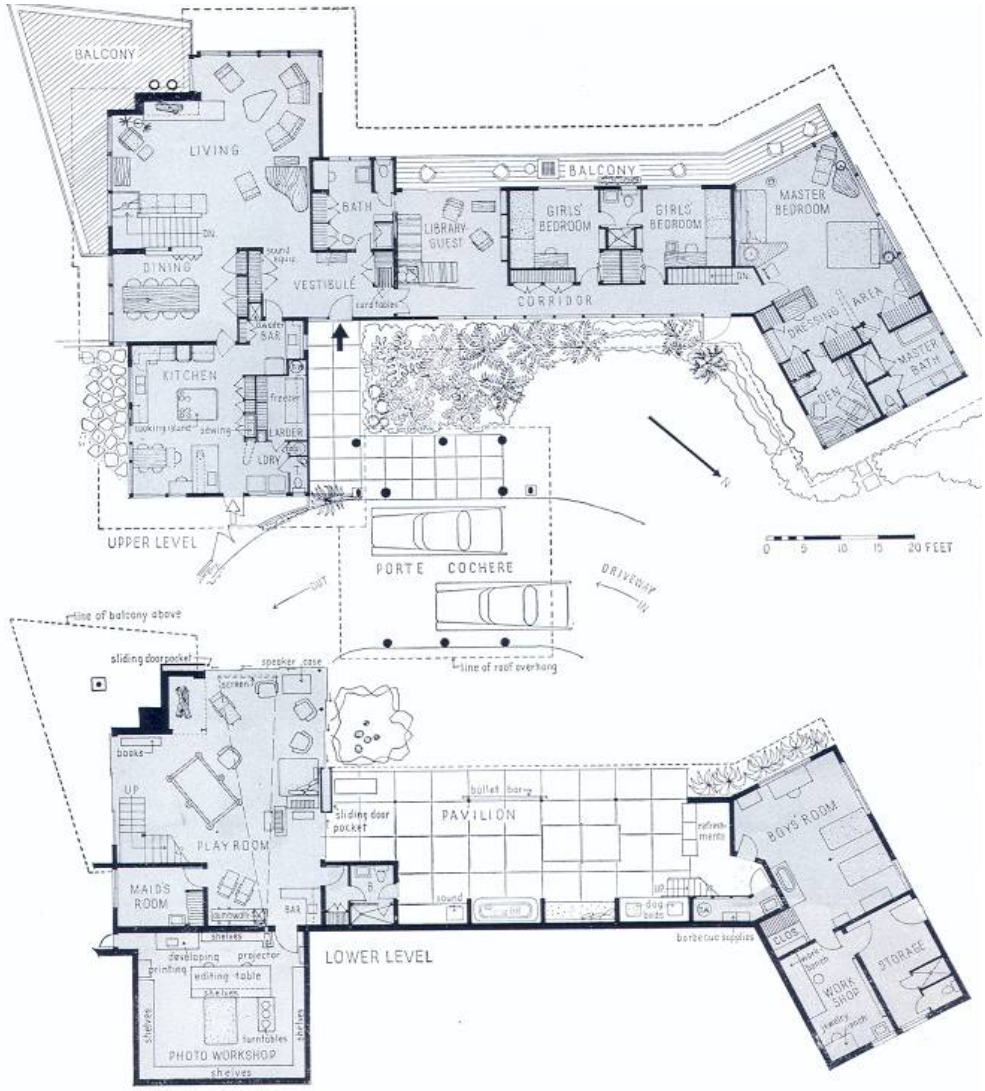


Fig. 7.16 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. views to bay from Mount Tantalus.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library; bottom, *House Beautiful* 1958

Fig. 7.17 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. Driveway and porte-cochere.
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 7.18 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. Living area
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.




This would be Certain general principles pertain in the judging of

Fig. 7.19 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. plan.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958.

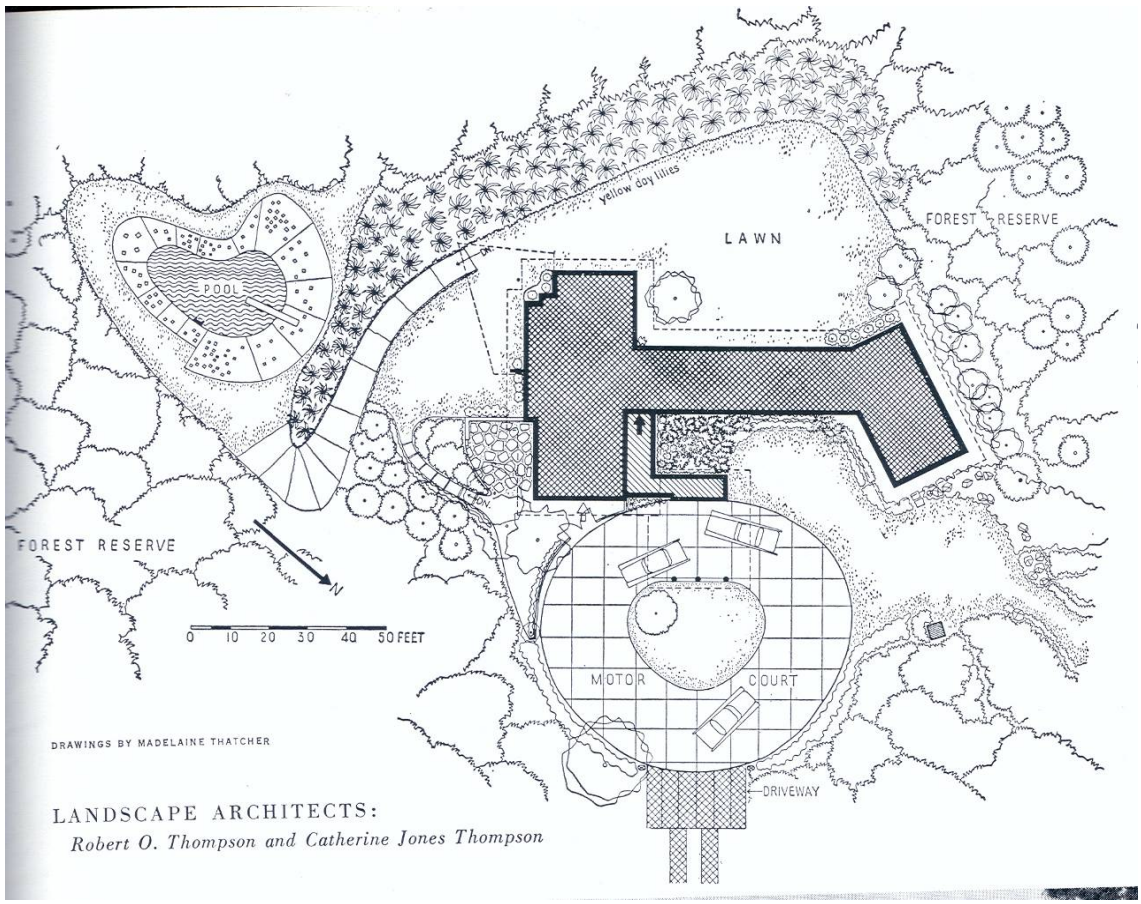



Fig. 7.20 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952. site plan.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958.

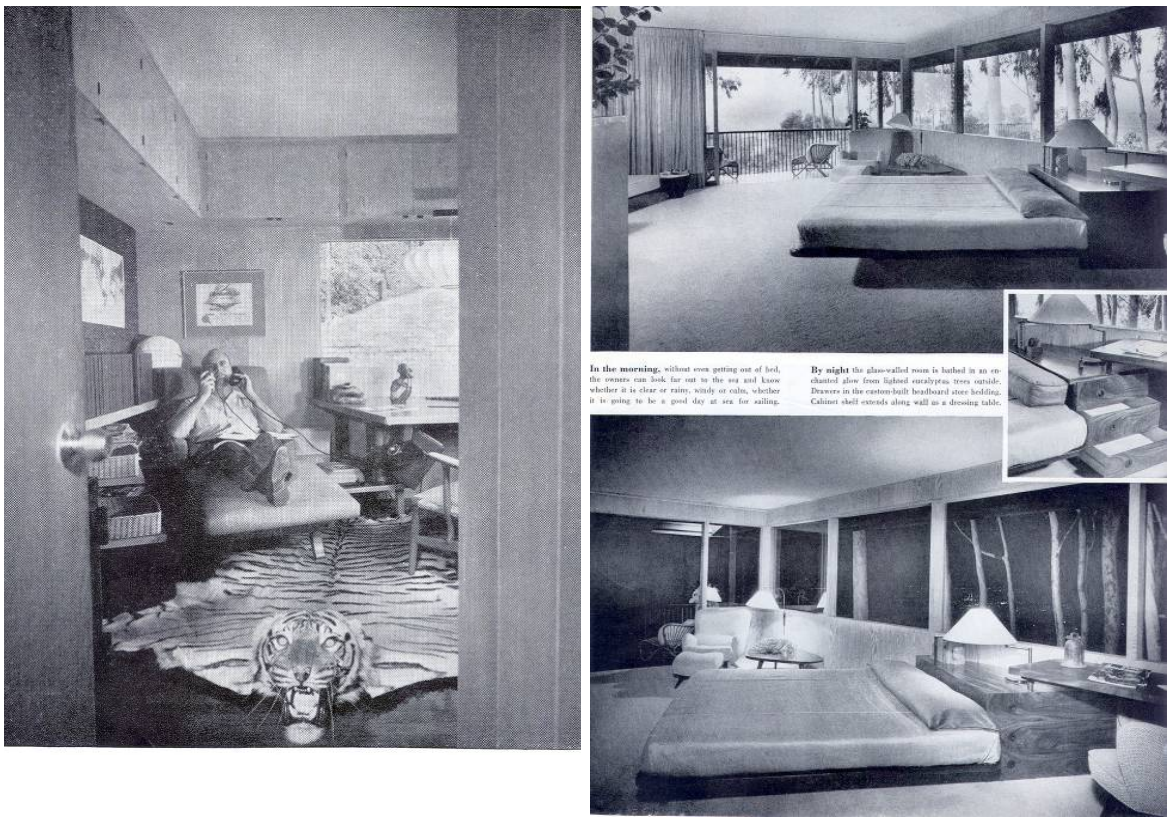



Fig. 7.21 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu. Howard Liljestrand in his study (left); master suite (right)
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958.

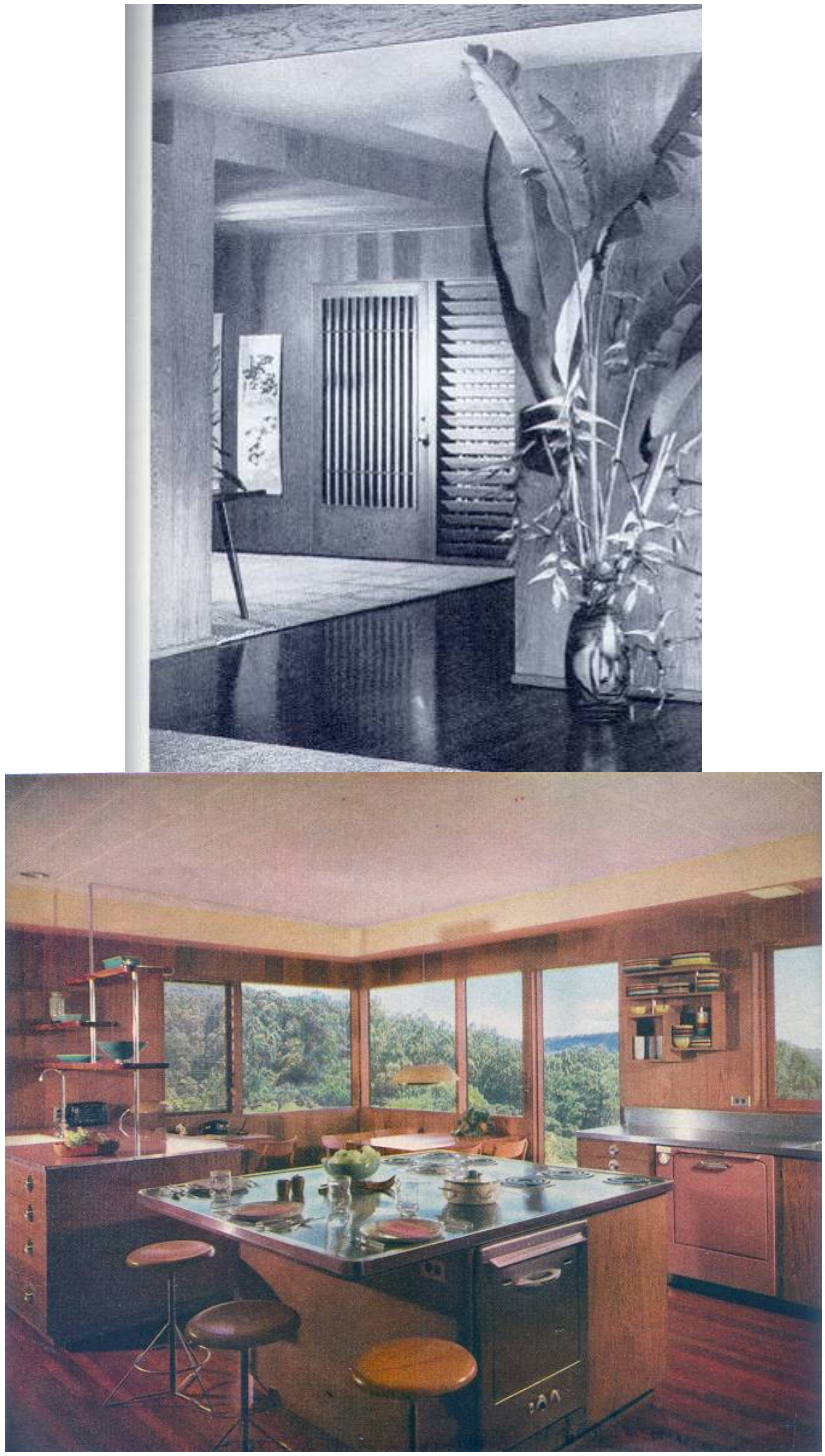


Fig. 7.22 Pace Setter 1958, Vladimir Ossipoff, Honolulu, ca 1952 .
Source: *House Beautiful* 1958


Fig. 8.1  Frank Lloyd Wright, portrait from *House Beautiful*
Source: *House Beautiful* October 1959

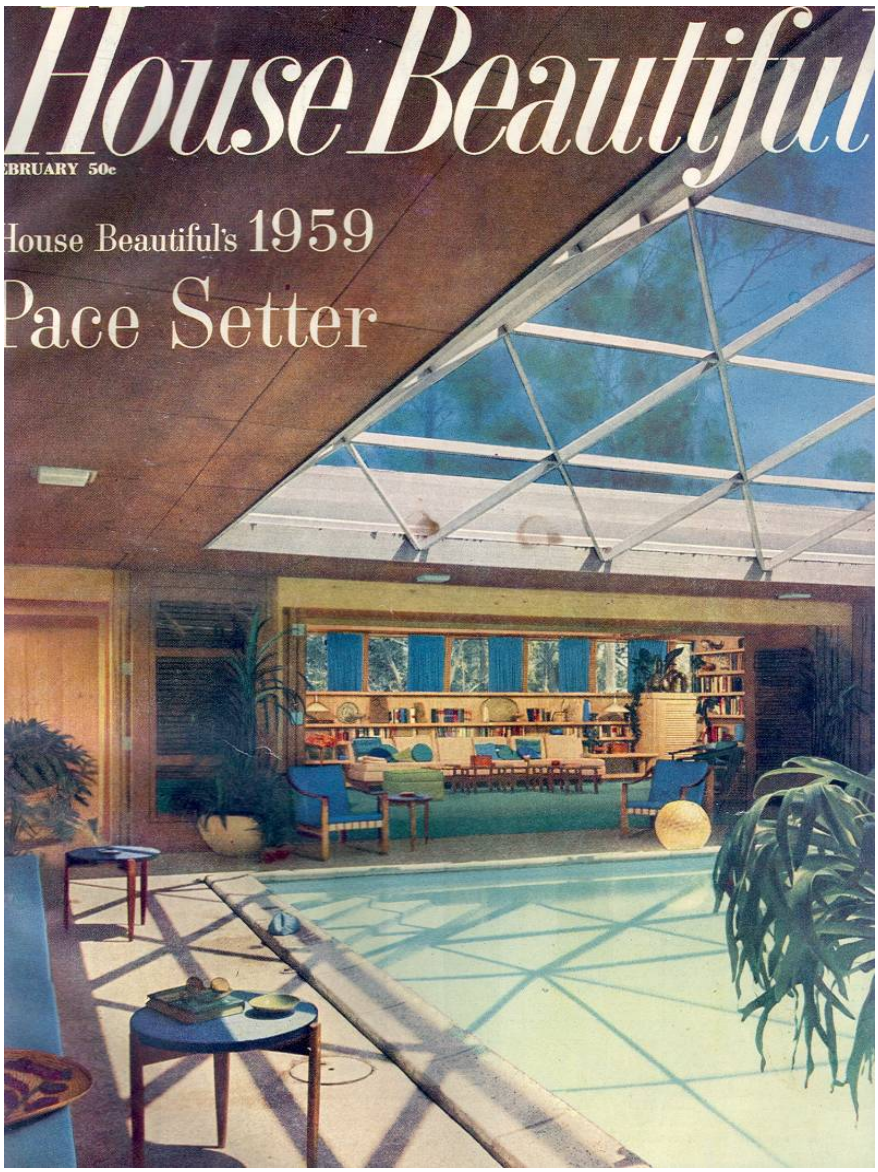



Fig. 8.2  Pace Setter 1959, Alfred Browning Parker, Miami, 1959.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1959

Image / Permissions Not Available

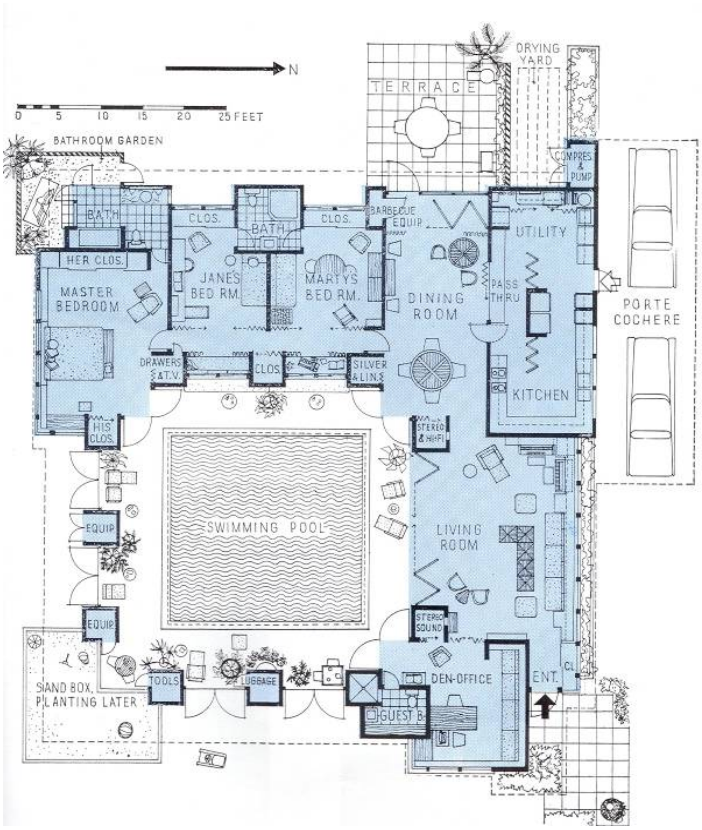



Fig. 8.3 Pace Setter 1959, Alfred Browning Parker, Miami, 1959.
Exterior and plan.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* 1959

Image / Permissions Not Available

Fig. 8.2  Pace Setter 1959, Alfred Browning Parker, Miami, 1959.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* 1959


Fig. 8.5 Pace Setter 1959, Alfred Browning Parker, Miami, 1959.
Diagonal motif (left); Rectangle motif (right).
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* 1959

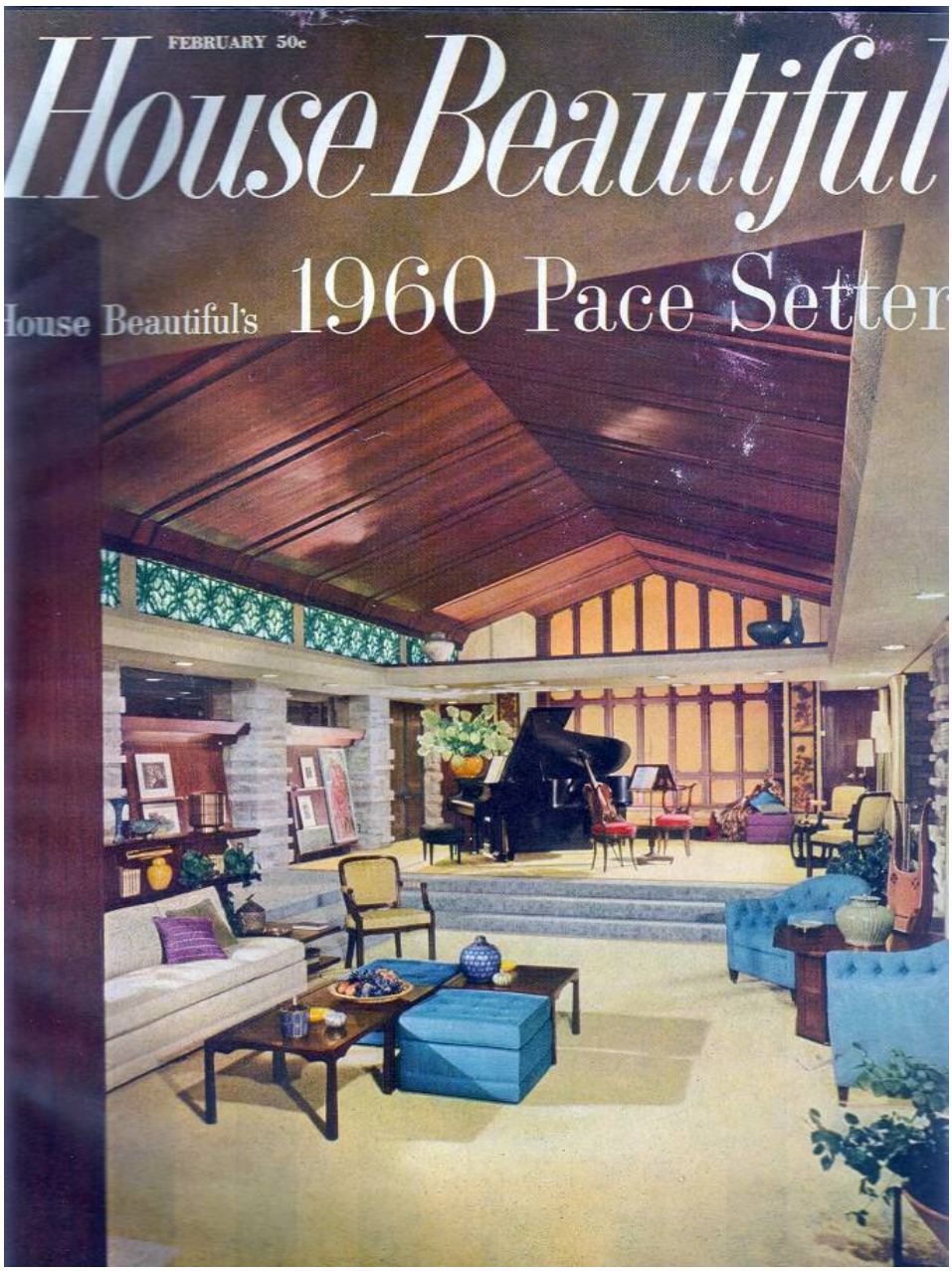



Fig. 8.6  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.

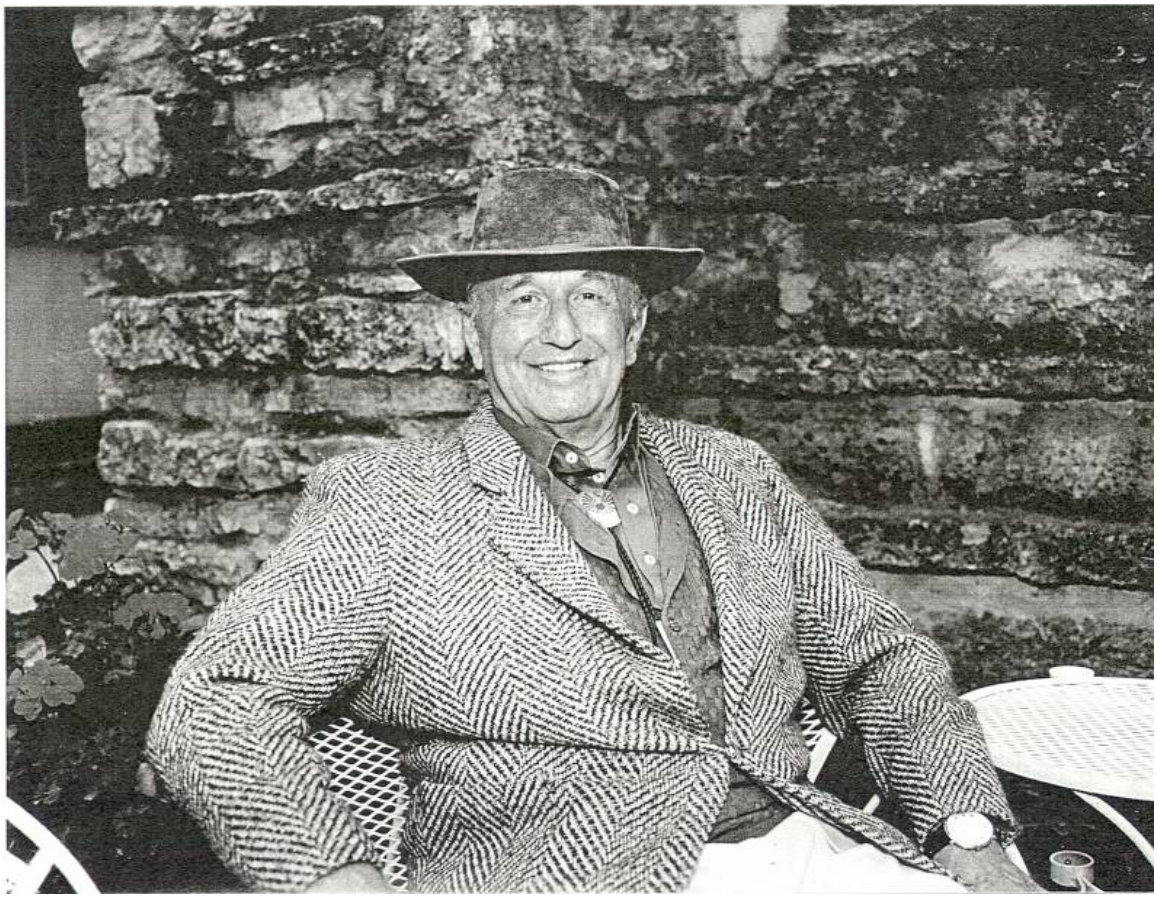


Fig. 8.7  John deKoven Hill, ca. 1993
Source: John deKoven Hill Papers. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

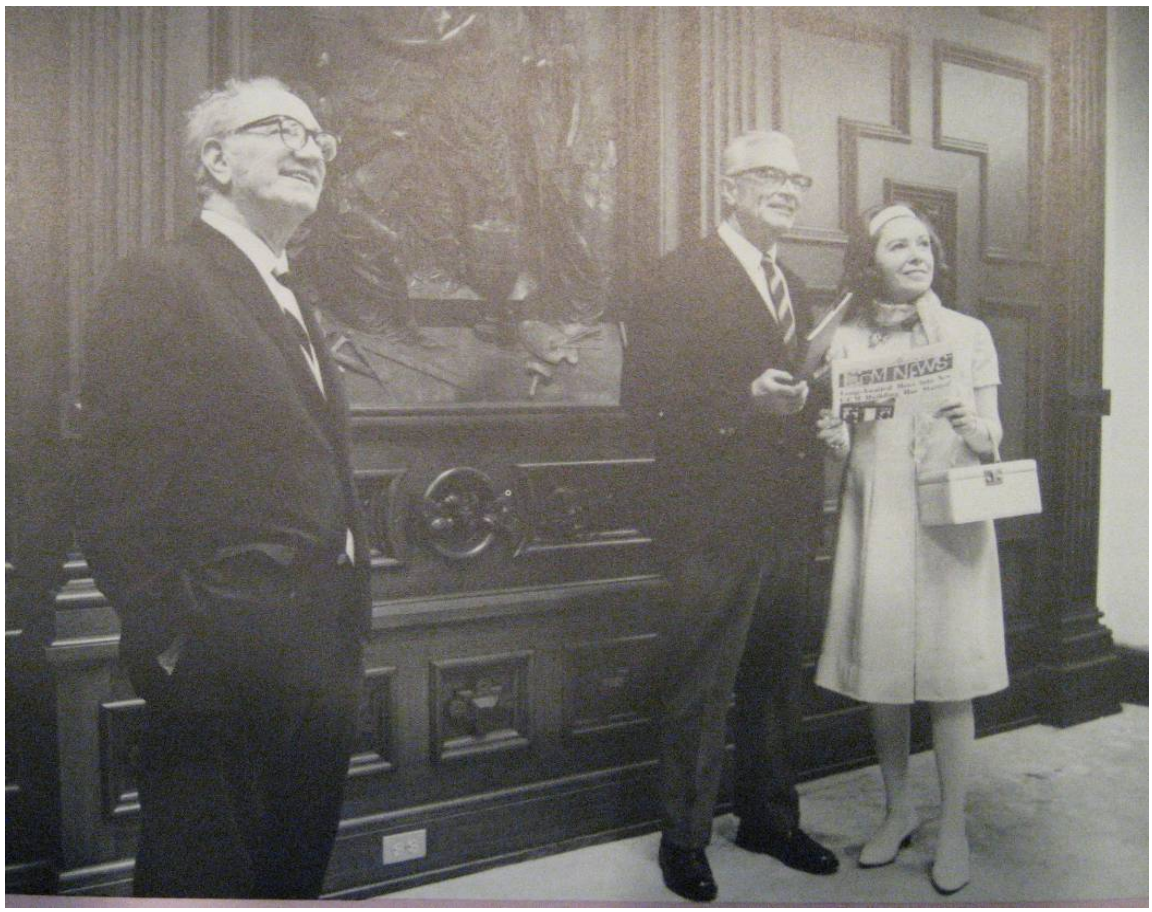



Fig. 8.8 J. Ralph Corbett (far left) and Patricia Corbett (far right), with Jack Wilson, Dean of University of Cincinnati
Source: *University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music*


Fig. 8.9 NuTone advertisements, 1960; photographed at Pace Setter 1960
Source: *House Beautiful* 1960


Fig. 8.10  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960.
Living area and piano alcove.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.

Image / Permissions Not Available

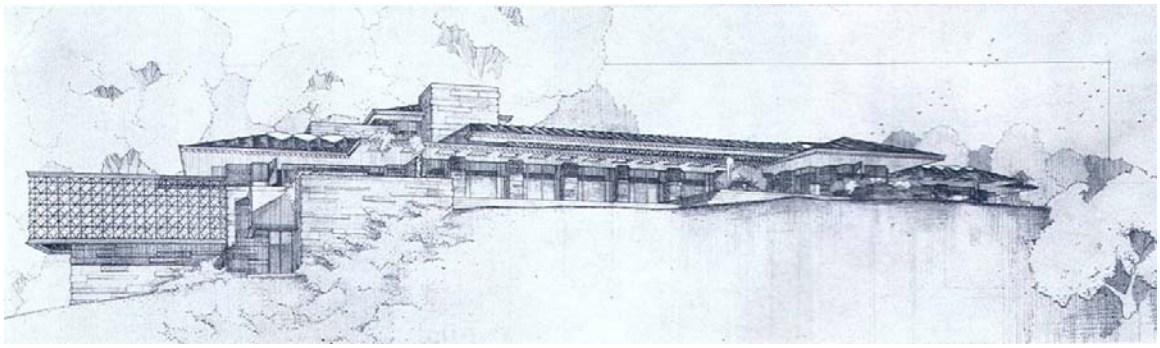


Fig. 8.11 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.

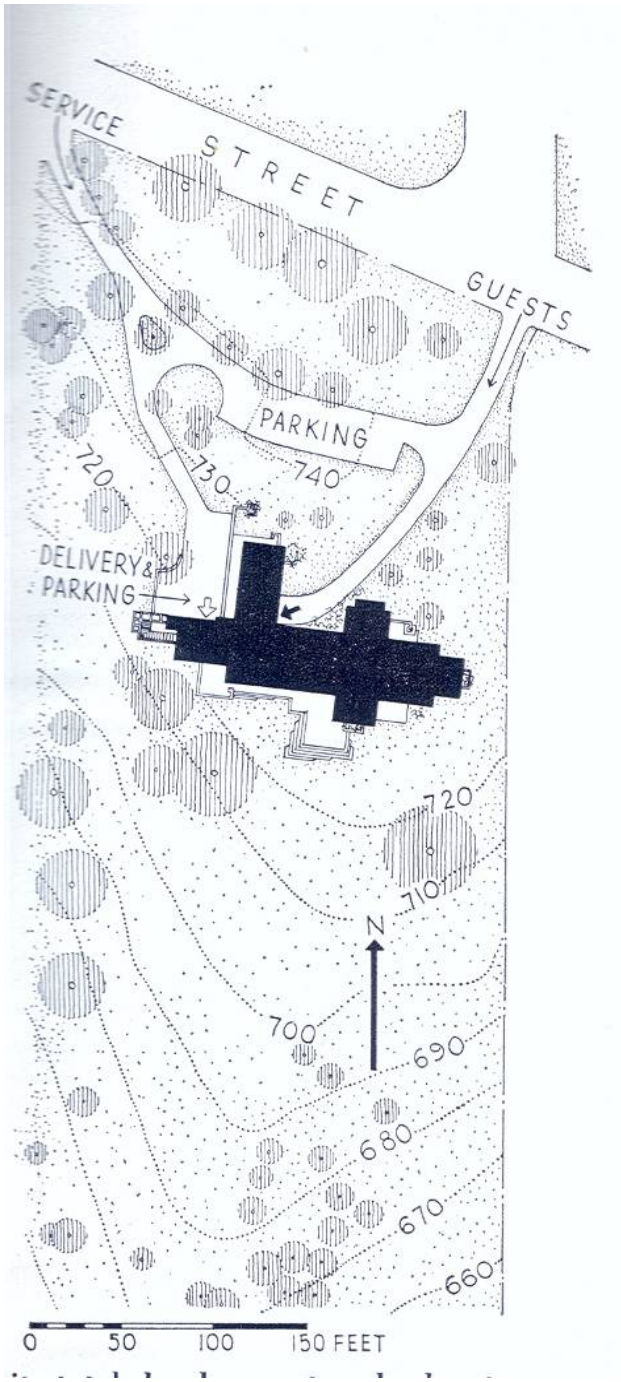



Fig. 8.12 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960.
site plan, Grandin Road to north, Ohio River to south.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.

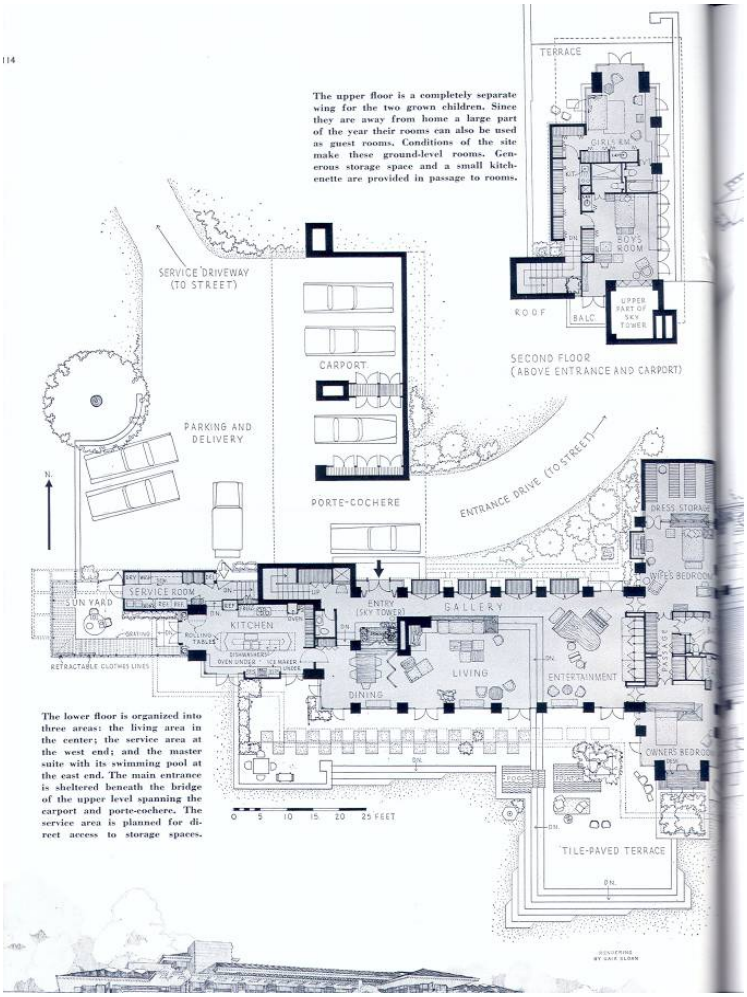



Fig. 8.13 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. plan
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.14 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. ALCOA roof advertisement. Pictured: Pace Setter 1960 roof.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.15  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. View from gateway at Grandin Road.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.

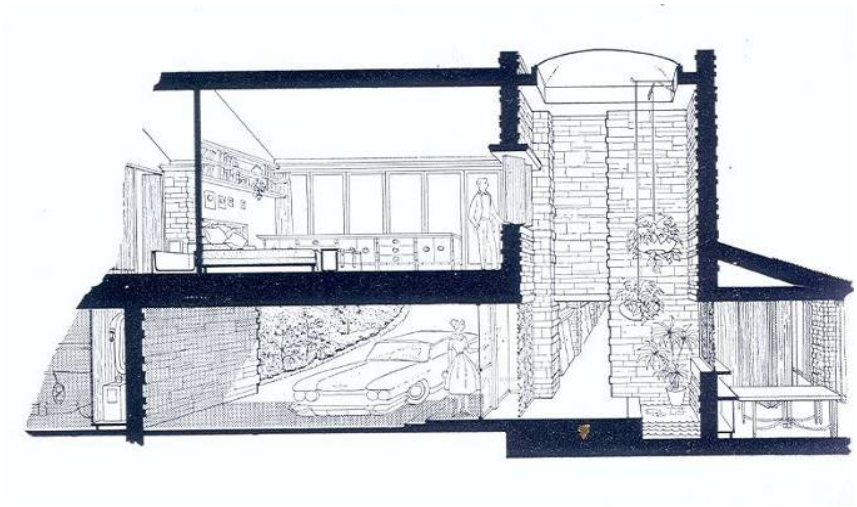


Image / Permissions Not Available

Fig. 8.16  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Section, light tower and image of “sky dome.”
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.

Image / Permissions Not Available

Fig. 8.17  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Swimming pool pavilion (left: looking toward master suite; right, looking toward exterior of pavilion).
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.

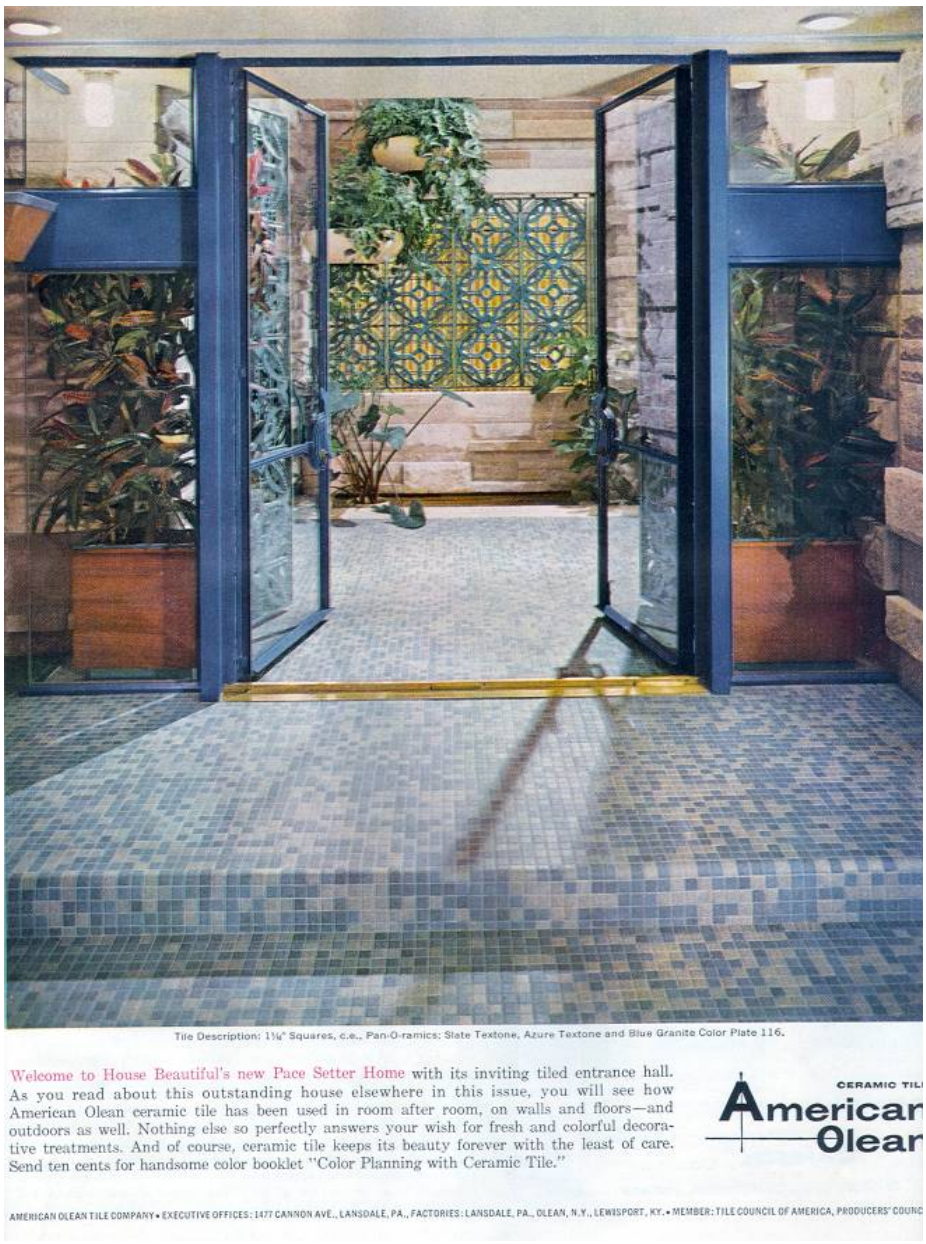
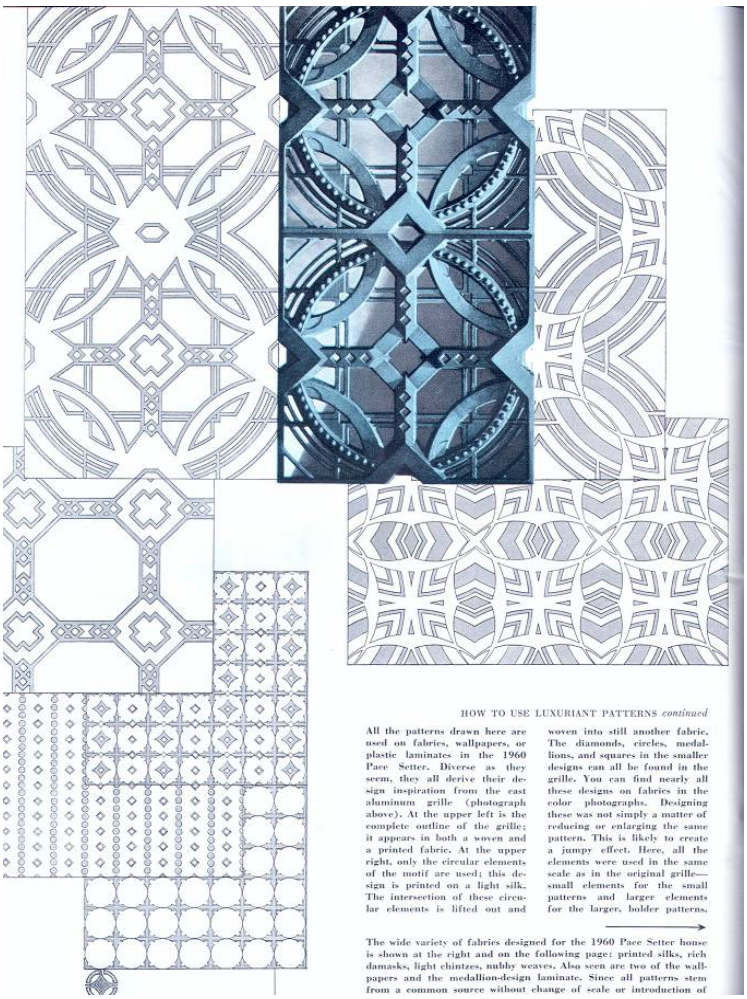



Fig. 8.18 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. American Olean Advertisement, showing main entry into light tower.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.19  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. decorative motif, living room (left) and dining room (right)
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.



HOW TO USE LUXURIANT PATTERNS *continued*

All the patterns drawn here are used on fabrics, wallpapers, or plastic laminates in the 1960 Pace Setter. Diverse as they seem, they all derive their design inspiration from the cast aluminum grille (photograph above). At the upper left is the complete outline of the grille; it appears in both a woven and a printed fabric. At the upper right, only the circular elements of the motif are used; this design is printed on a light silk. The intersection of these circular elements is lifted out and woven into still another fabric. The diamonds, circles, medallions, and squares in the smaller designs can all be found in the grille. You can find nearly all these designs on fabrics in the color photographs. Designing these was not simply a matter of reducing or enlarging the same pattern. This is likely to create a jumpy effect. Here, all the elements were used in the same scale as in the original grille—small elements for the small patterns and larger elements for the larger, bolder patterns.

The wide variety of fabrics designed for the 1960 Pace Setter house is shown at the right and on the following page: printed silks, rich damasks, light chintzes, nubby weaves. Also seen are two of the wallpapers and the medallion-design laminate. Since all patterns stem from a common source without change of scale or introduction of

Fig. 8.20 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Pace Setter leitmotif.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.

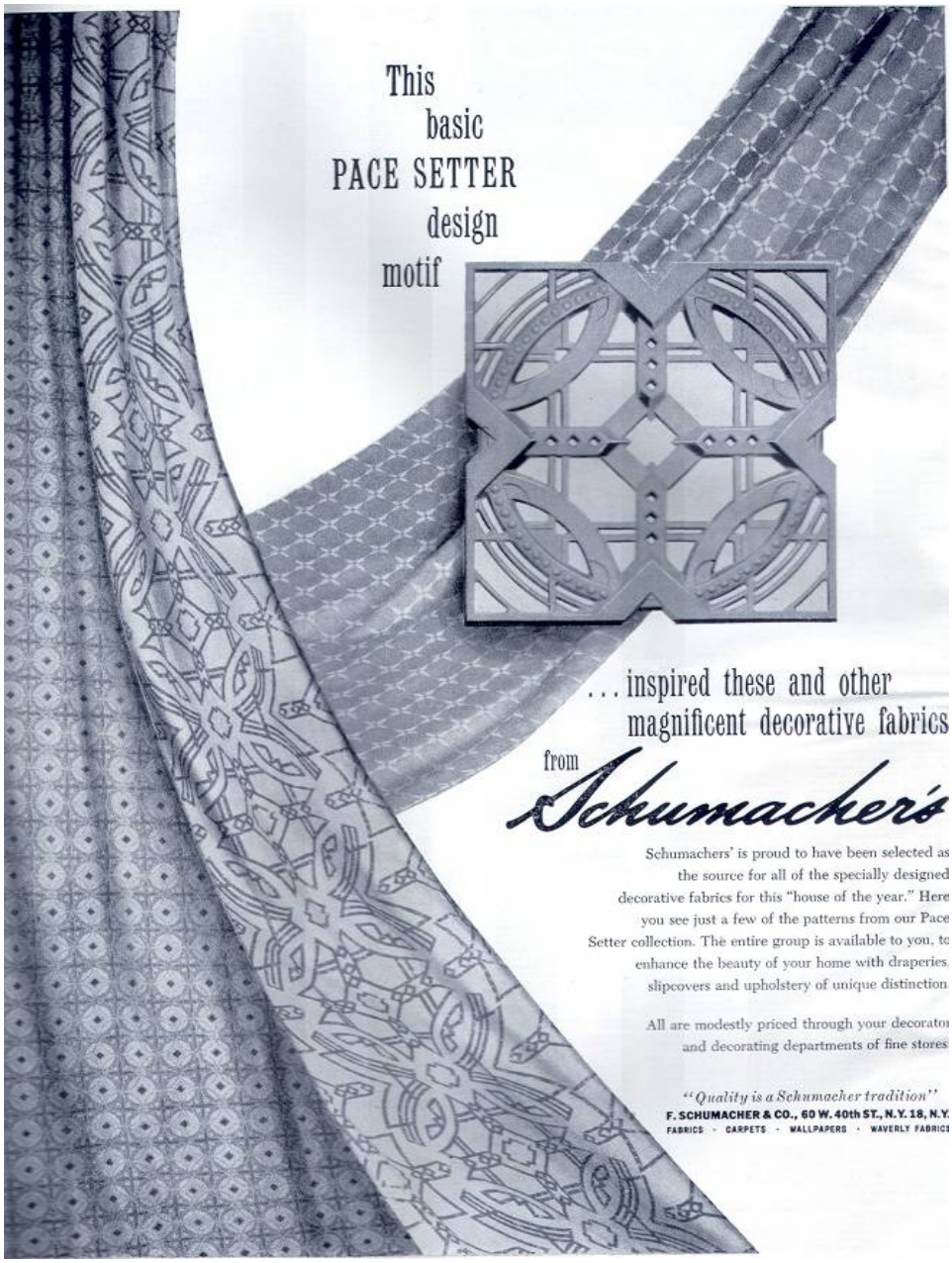



Fig. 8.21 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Pace Setter fabrics, made by Schumacher. Schumacher Advertisement.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.22  Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Pace Setter fabrics, made by Schumacher.
Source: Images by Ezra Stoller / *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.23 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Pace Setter kitchen with custom Formica. Formica Advertisement.
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.


Fig. 8.24 Pace Setter 1960, John deKoven Hill, Cincinnati, 1960. Pace Setter custom furniture, designed by Hill for Henredon. Henredon Advertisement
Source: *House Beautiful* February 1960.

Fig. 8.25 Elizabeth Gordon in Japan
Source: Gordon Papers, Freer Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

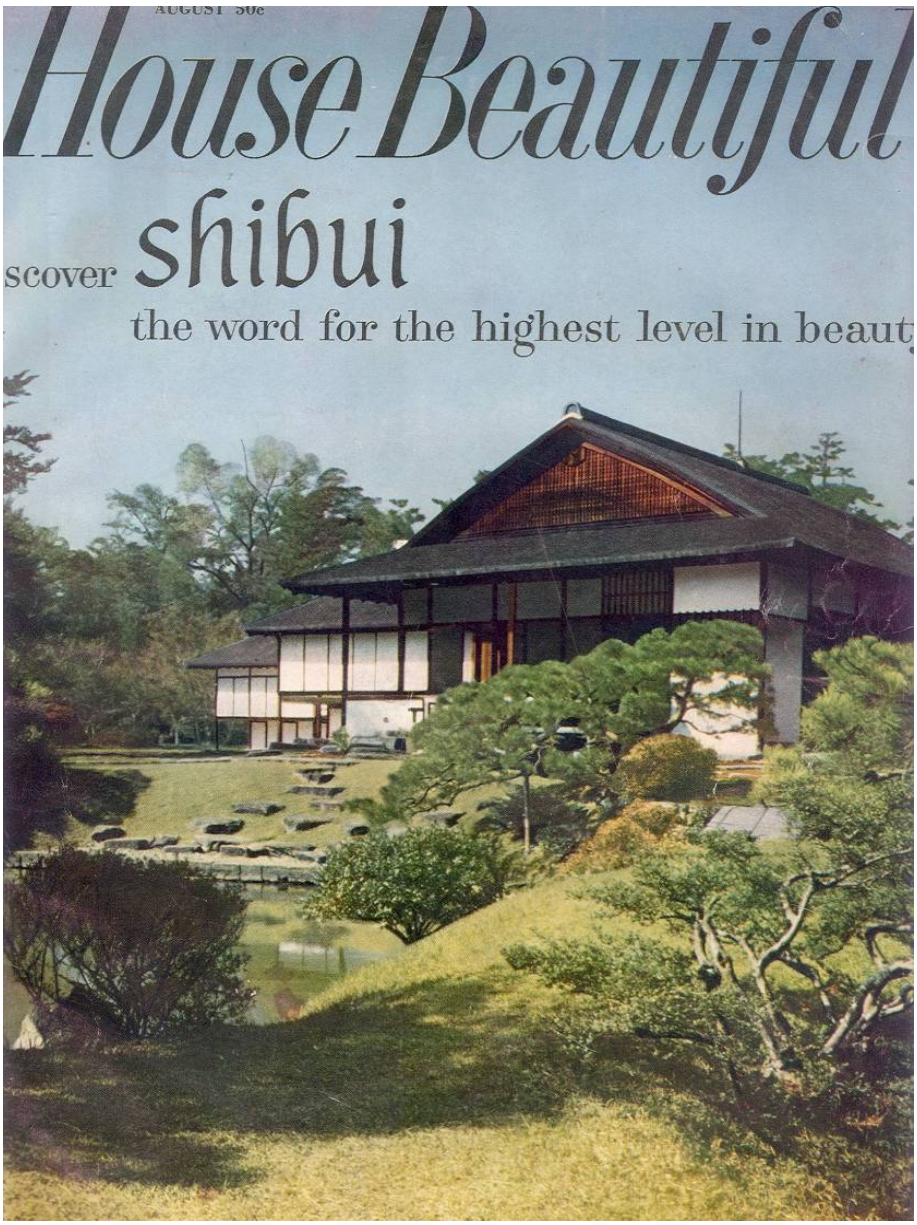



Fig. 8.26 *shibui House Beautiful* cover, August 1960
Source: *House Beautiful* 1960

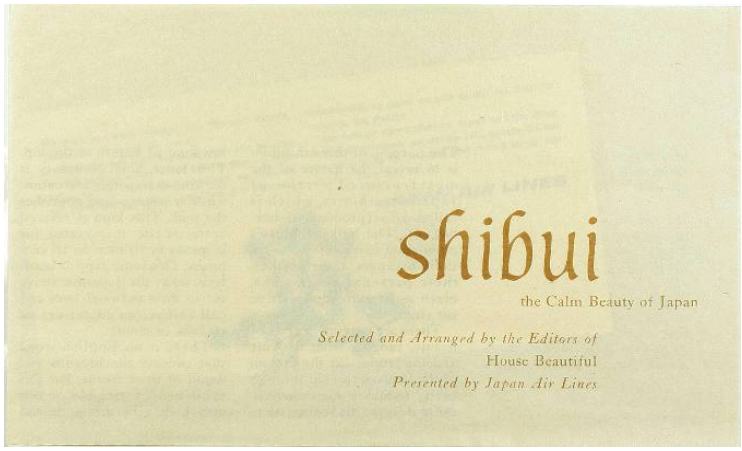
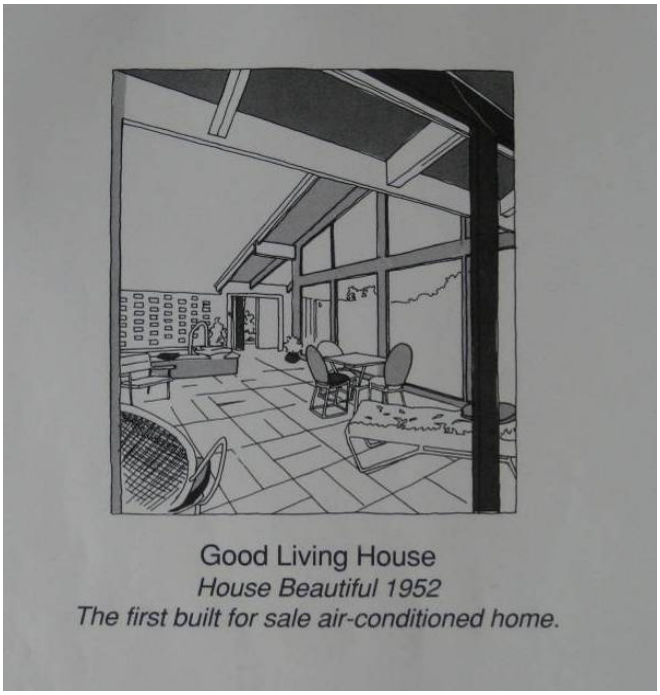



Fig. 8.27 *House Beautiful shibui* Exhibition, ca. 1962.
Source: Gordon Papers, Freer Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Fig. 8.28 *House Beautiful shibui* Exhibition, ca. 1962.
Source: Gordon Papers, Freer Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Fig. 8.29 *House Beautiful shibui* Exhibition, ca. 1962.
Source: Gordon Papers, Freer Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Fig. 8.30 Roger Rasbach, ca. 2000.



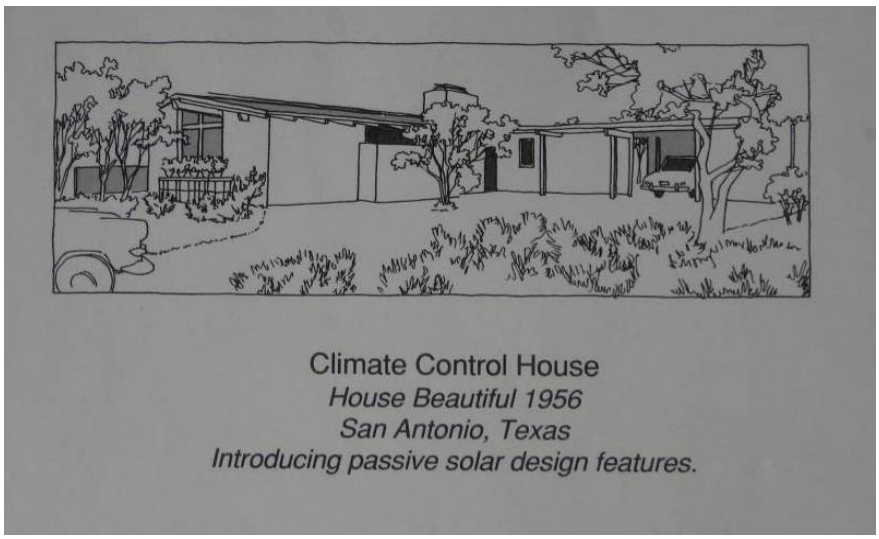




Fig. 8.31 Roger Rasbach, Good Living House (1952) and Climate Control House (1956)
Source: Roger Rasbach, *The Provident Home* (1993)

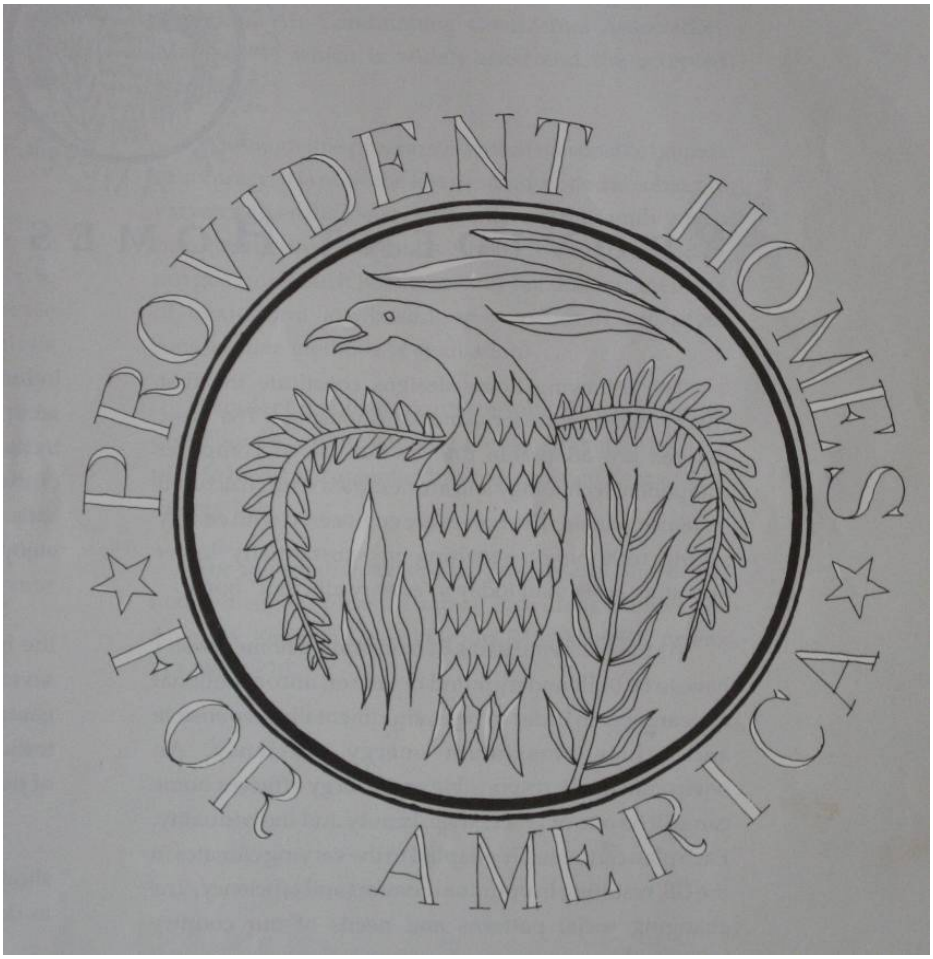



Fig. 8.32 Rasbach Provident Home logo, borrowing from *House Beautiful's* Pace Setter Program logo
Source: Roger Rasbach, *The Provident Home* (1993)

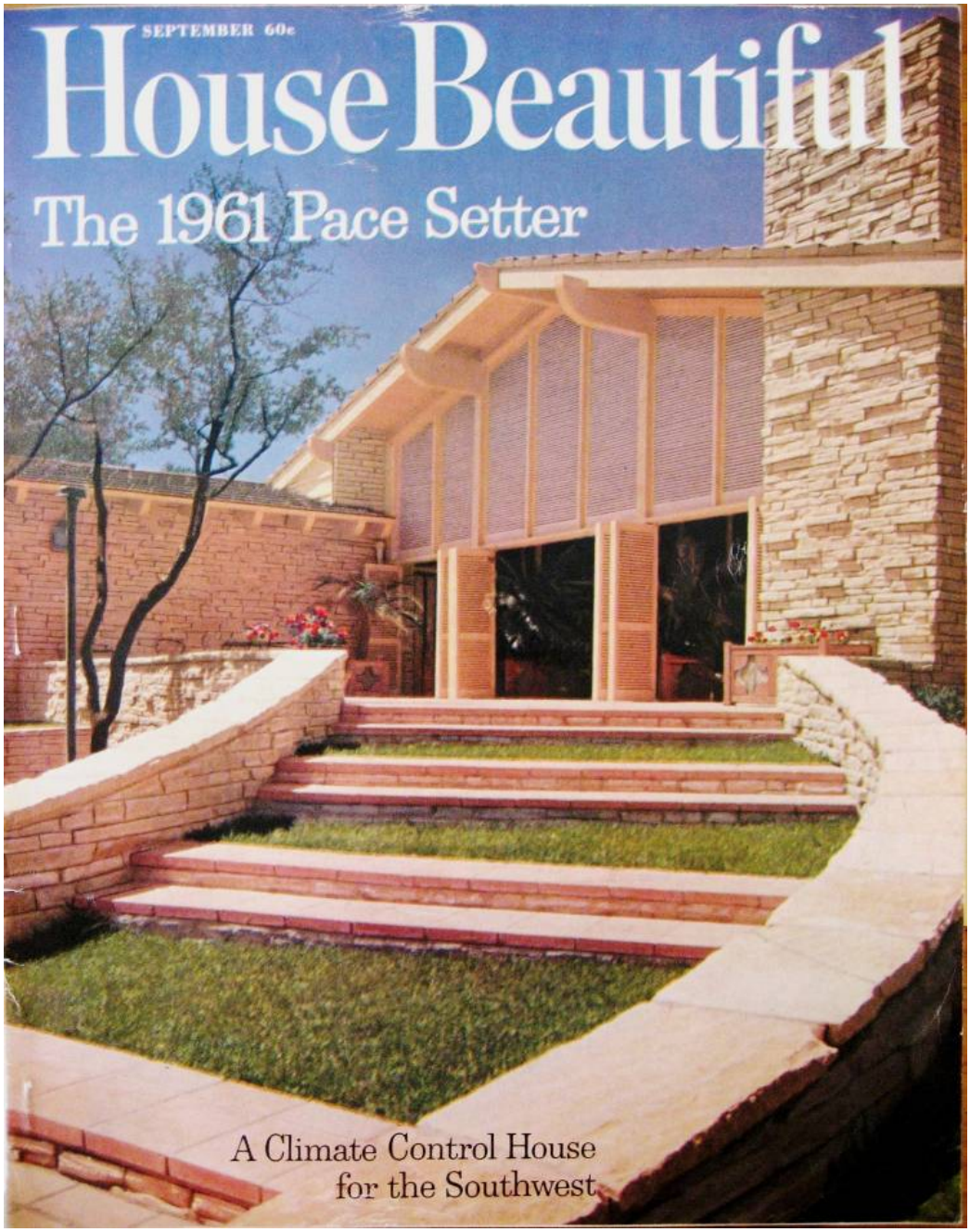



Fig. 8.33 Pace Setter 1961, Roger Rasbach, San Antonio, 1961.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1961

Fig. 8.34  Pace Setter 1961, Roger Rasbach, San Antonio, 1961. Atrium and retractable roof
Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

Fig. 8.35  Pace Setter 1961, Roger Rasbach, San Antonio, 1961, living room. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.

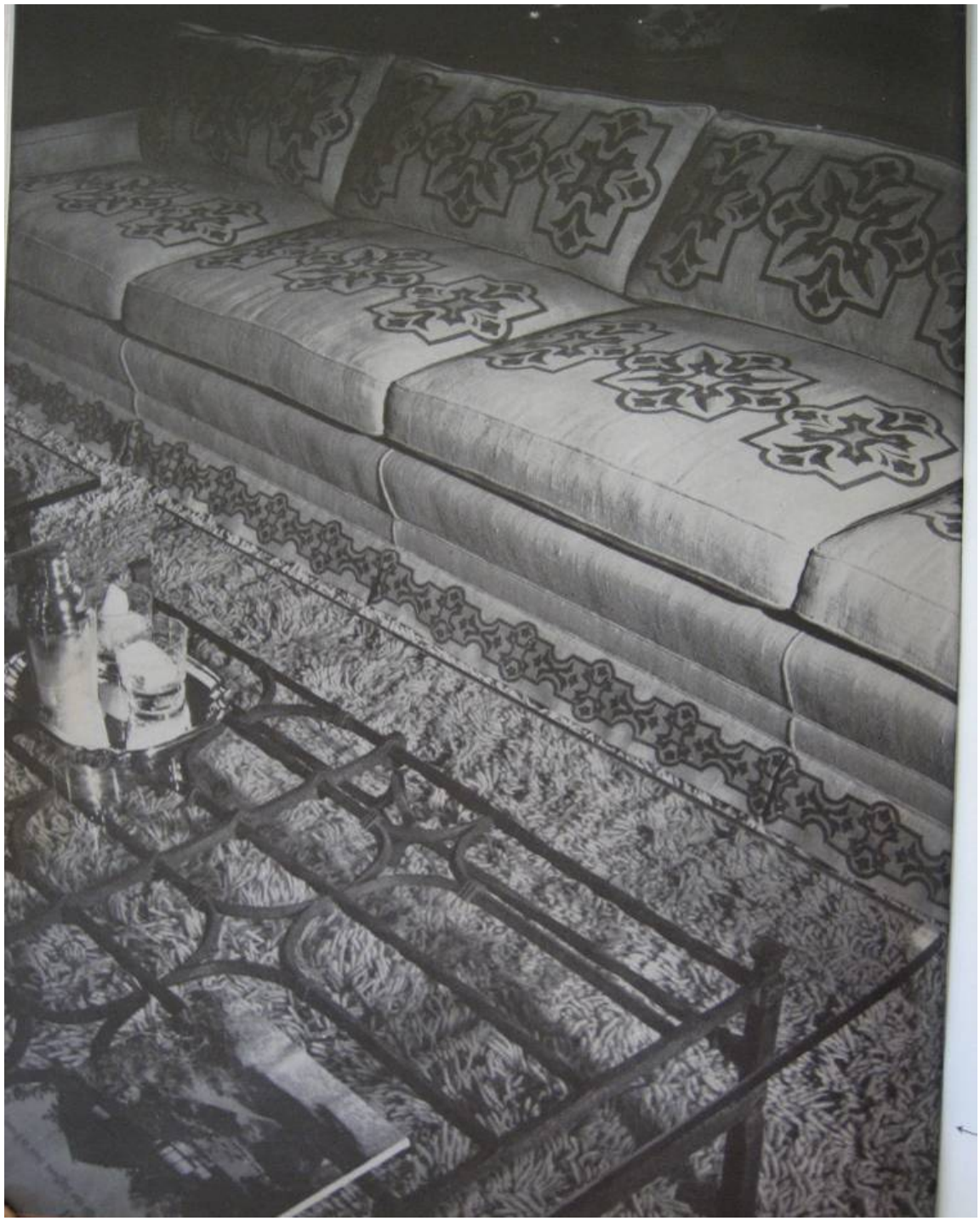


Fig. 8.36 Pace Setter 1961, Roger Rasbach, San Antonio, 1961. Interior décor, living room (by *House Beautiful* staff).
Source: Maynard Parker / *House Beautiful* 1961.


Fig. 8.37 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965. Source: *House Beautiful* 1965.


Fig. 8.38 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965.View from Biscayne Bay.
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.

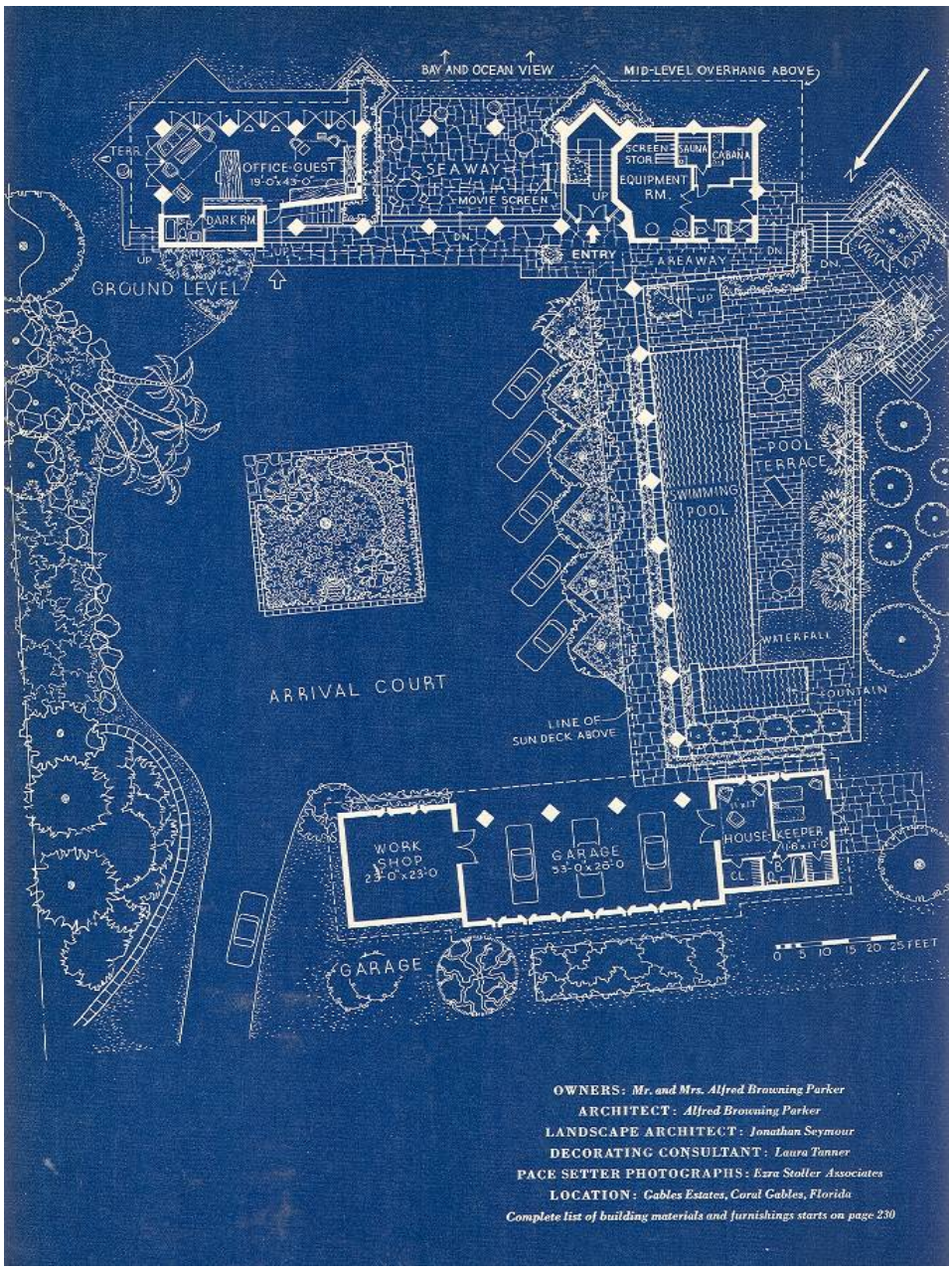



Fig. 8.39 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965. Plan.
Source: *House Beautiful* 1965

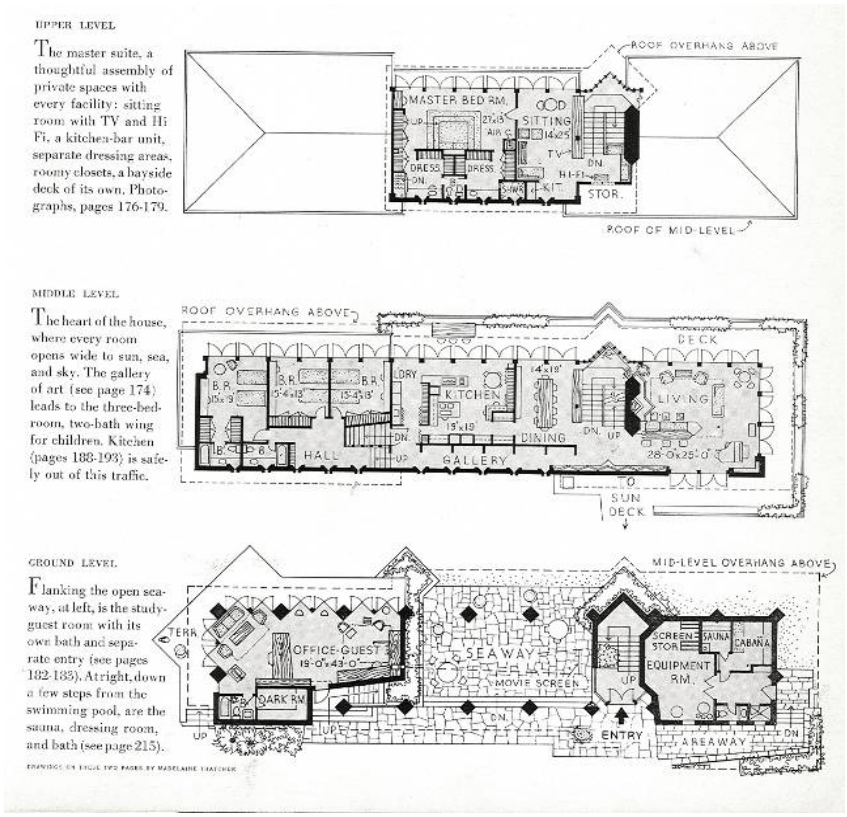


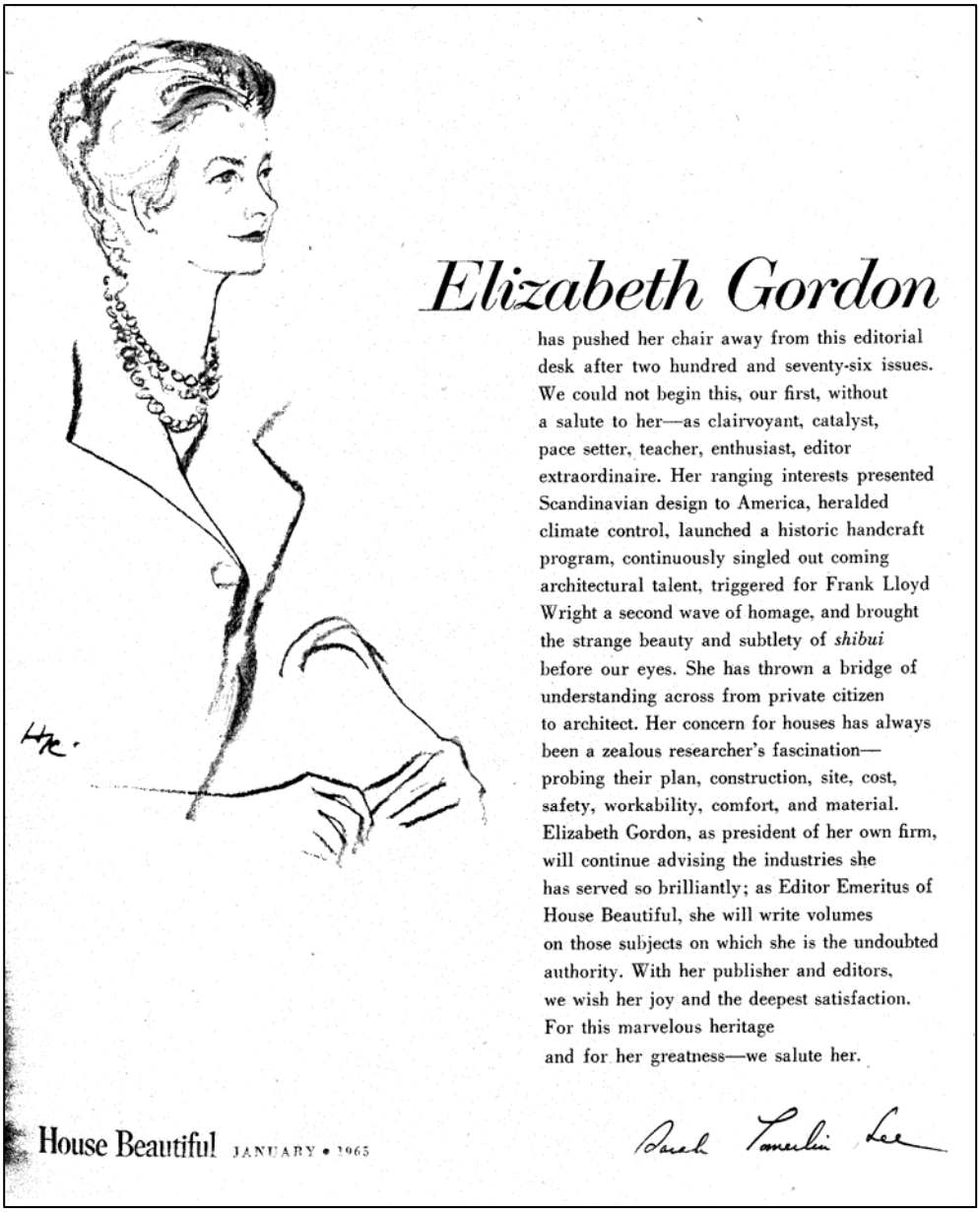

Image / Permissions Not Available

Fig. 8.40 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965. Plan; north elevation (facing driveway)
Source: *House Beautiful* 1965


Fig. 8.41 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965.View from Biscayne Bay. Photographed ca. 2000.
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.


Fig. 8.42 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965.
Living area (top) and staircase (bottom).
Source: Ezra Stoller (top); *House Beautiful* 1965 (bottom)


Fig. 8.43 Pace Setter 1965, Alfred Browning Parker, Coral Gables, Florida, 1965. Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.



# *Elizabeth Gordon*

has pushed her chair away from this editorial desk after two hundred and seventy-six issues. We could not begin this, our first, without a salute to her—as clairvoyant, catalyst, pace setter, teacher, enthusiast, editor extraordinaire. Her ranging interests presented Scandinavian design to America, heralded climate control, launched a historic handcraft program, continuously singled out coming architectural talent, triggered for Frank Lloyd Wright a second wave of homage, and brought the strange beauty and subtlety of *shibui* before our eyes. She has thrown a bridge of understanding across from private citizen to architect. Her concern for houses has always been a zealous researcher's fascination—probing their plan, construction, site, cost, safety, workability, comfort, and material. Elizabeth Gordon, as president of her own firm, will continue advising the industries she has served so brilliantly; as Editor Emeritus of House Beautiful, she will write volumes on those subjects on which she is the undoubted authority. With her publisher and editors, we wish her joy and the deepest satisfaction. For this marvelous heritage and for her greatness—we salute her.

Sarah Tomerlin Lee

House Beautiful JANUARY • 1965

Fig. 9.1 Elizabeth Gordon, retirement dedication, January 1965.
Source: *House Beautiful* January 1965


Fig. 9.2  Elizabeth Gordon, 1987.
Source: Maryland newspaper clipping, Gordon Papers, Freer Archives, Smithsonian Institution.


Fig. 9.3  Pace Setter parting shot, (Parker, Pace Setter 1954).
Source: Ezra Stoller Archives.

## Appendix A: Catalog of Pace Setter Houses

1. 1946: Cliff May (May House, West Los Angeles, CA)
2. 1948: Cliff May (Riviera Ranch, Brentwood, CA)
3. 1949: Emil Schmidlin (Orange, NJ)
4. 1950a: Edwin Wadsworth for David D. Bohannon (San Mateo, CA)
5. 1950b: Morgan Stedman for David D. Bohannon (San Mateo, CA)
6. 1950c: Edwin Wadsworth for David D. Bohannon (San Mateo, CA)
7. 1951: Julius Gregory (Dobbs Ferry, NY)
8. 1953: Henry Eggers & Walter Wilkman (Hoefer House, Bronxville, NY)
9. 1954: Alfred Browning Parker, (Parker House, Coral Gables, FL)
10. 1955: Harwell Hamilton Harris (Texas State Fair, Dallas, TX)
11. 1956 “mini”: Alfred Browning Parker (Friedman House, Miami, FL)
12. 1956: Morgan Stedman (San Francisco, CA)
13. 1958: Vladimir Ossipoff (Liljestrand House, Honolulu, HI)
14. 1959: Alfred Browning Parker (Miller House, Coconut Grove, FL)
15. 1960: John DeKoven Hill (Corbett House, Cincinnati, OH)
16. 1961: Roger Rasbach (Halff House, San Antonio, TX)
17. 1965: Alfred Browning Parker (Parker House, Miami, FL)

# Appendix A
# Catalog of Pace Setter Houses

Image / Permissions

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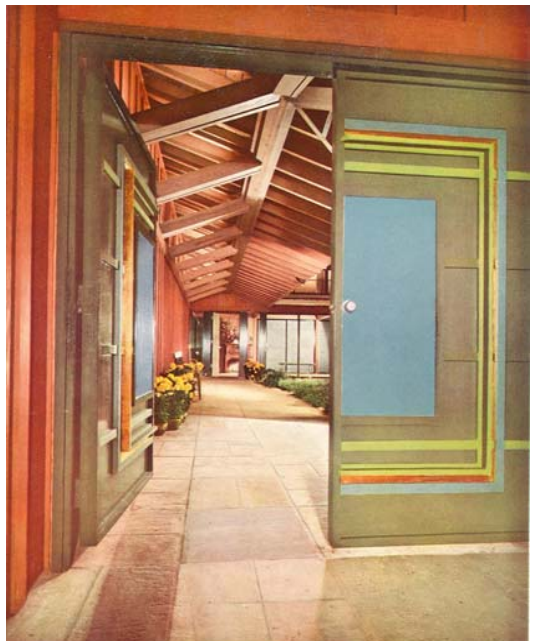
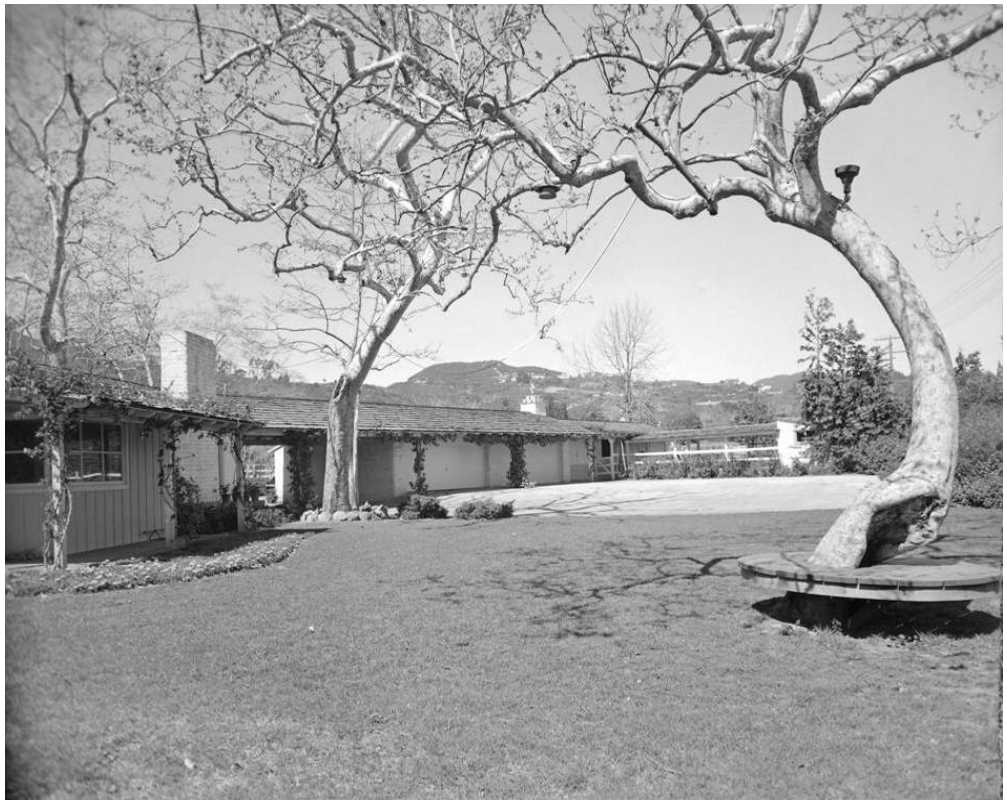
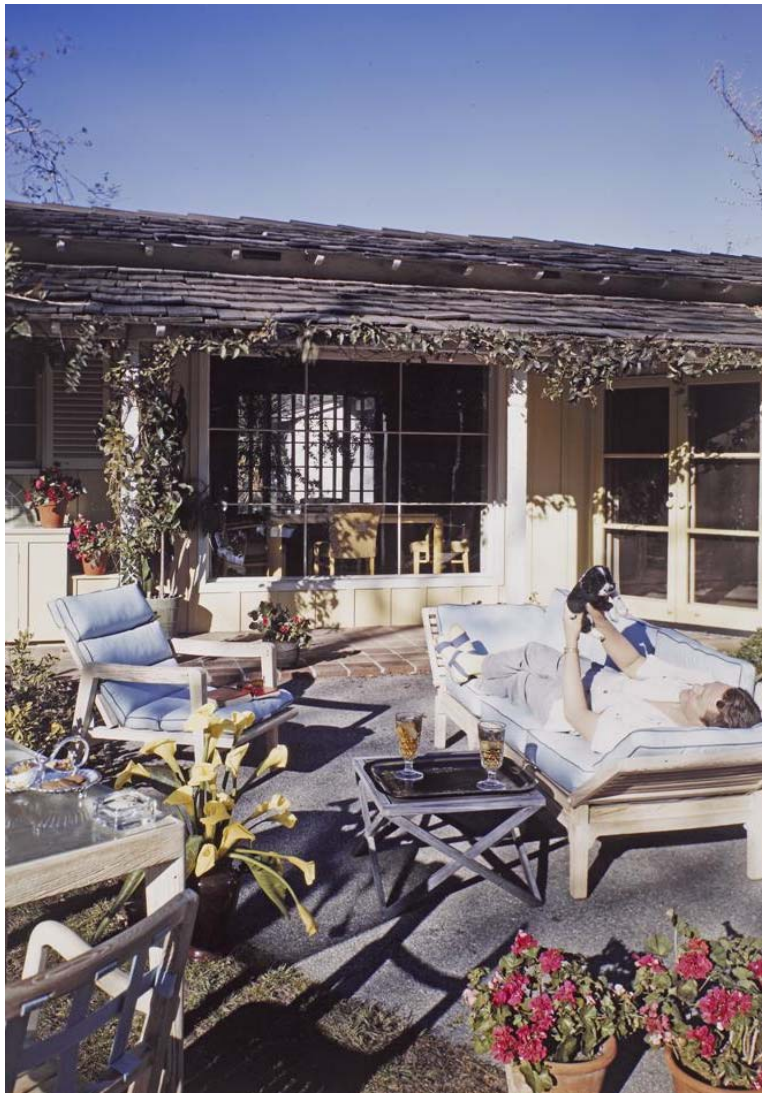
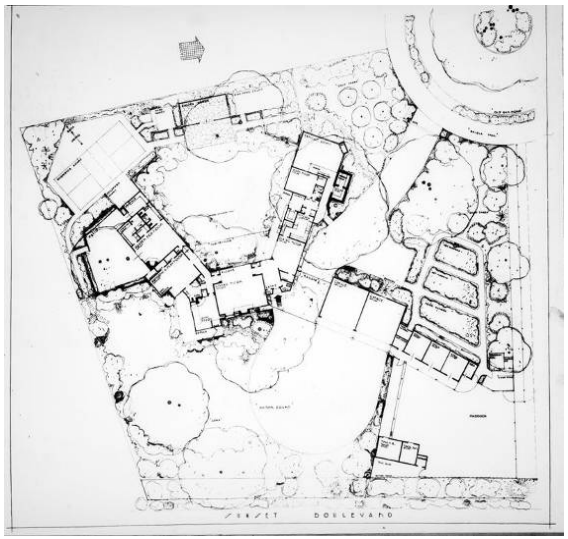
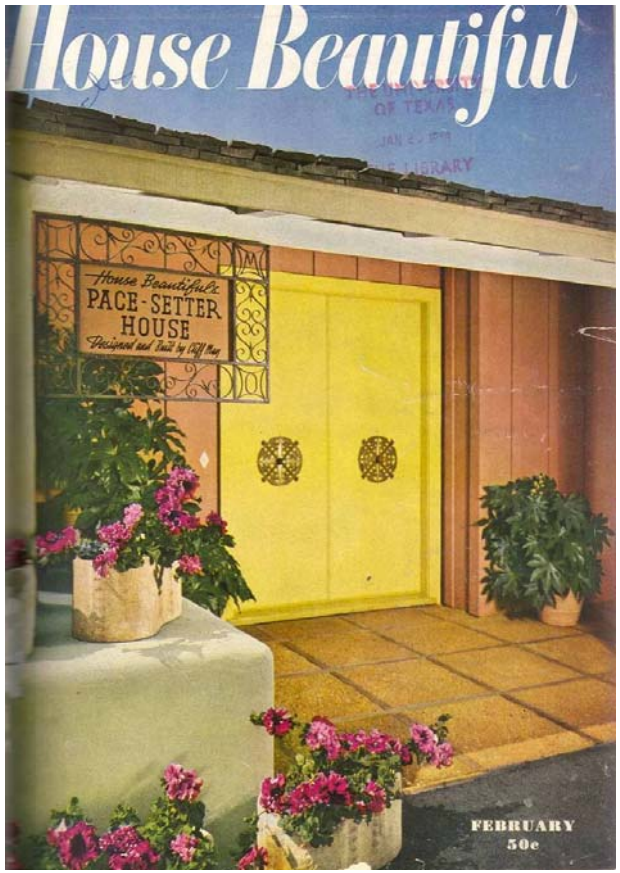




**Pace Setter Prologue 1946**
Los Angeles, California
Cliff May
*House Beautiful* April 1946

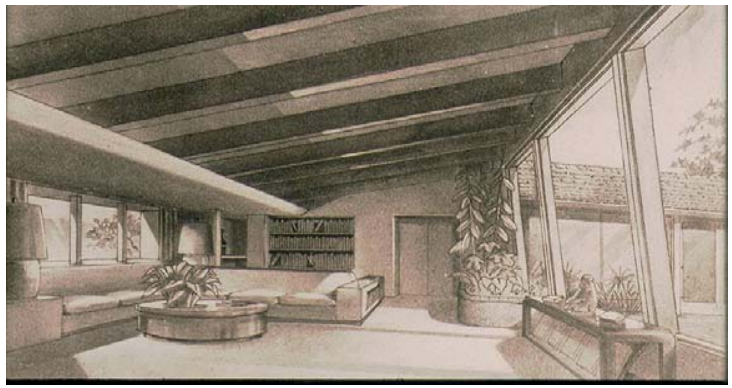







Designer: Cliff May
Original Client: speculative / *House Beautiful*; purchased by Neil Monroe (RIT Dye)
Construction Date: 1947-48
Interiors: furnished by *House Beautiful*
Color Stylist: William Manker
Landscape Design: Doug Baylis
Builder / Contractor: Cliff May
Square Footage: 4,000 living; 1,570 ancillary spaces
Street Address: Old Ranch Road, Riviera Ranch
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

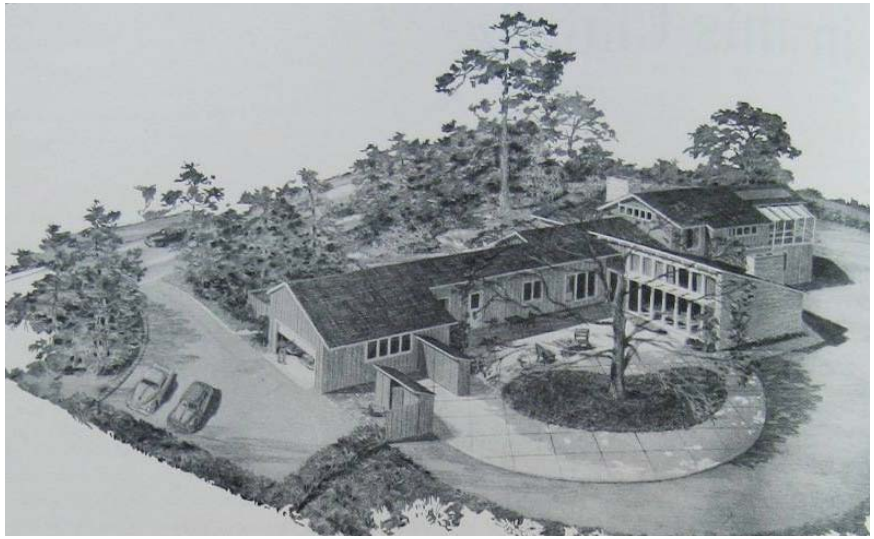
**Pace Setter 1948**
Los Angeles, California
Cliff May
*House Beautiful* February 1948

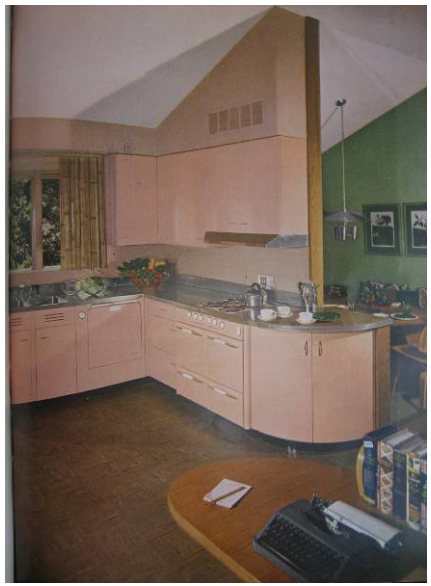



Architect: Emil A. Schmidlin
Original Client: None listed
Construction Date: ca 1949

Assistant Designers: Ellis Leigh
Interior Decoration: James Wyckoff of Lord and Taylor / *House Beautiful* staff
Color Stylist: William Manker
Landscape Design: Ethelbert Furlong
Landscape Design Consultant: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: Frederick Noef and James Greeley
Climate Analysis: Dr. Paul Sipple
Solar study and orientation: James Marston Fitch
Square Footage: ca. 3,000
Street Address: Seven Oaks Park, 205 Austen Road
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1949**
Orange, New Jersey
Emil A. Schmidlin
*House Beautiful* November 1949

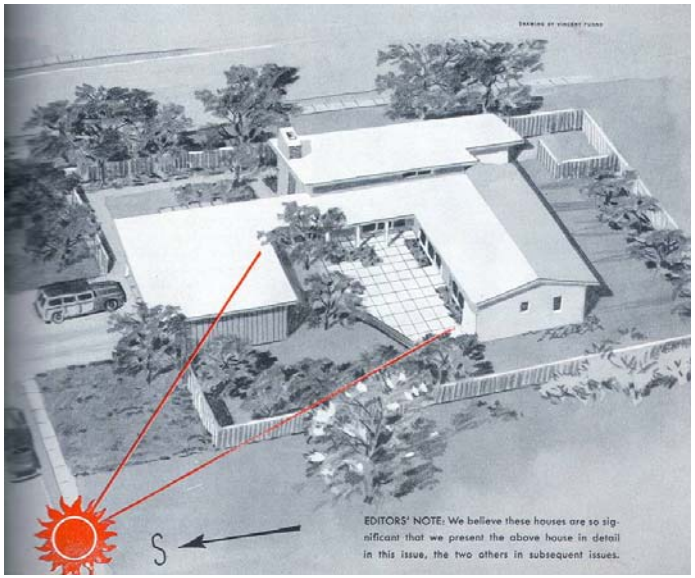


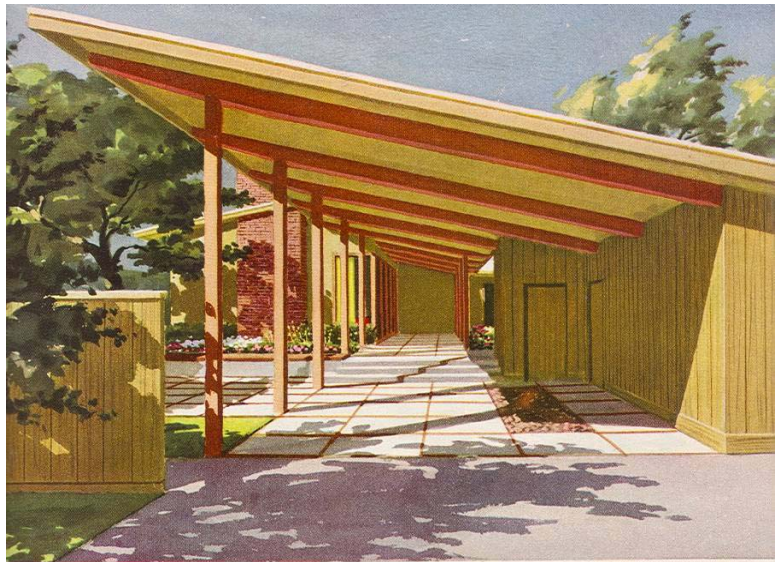


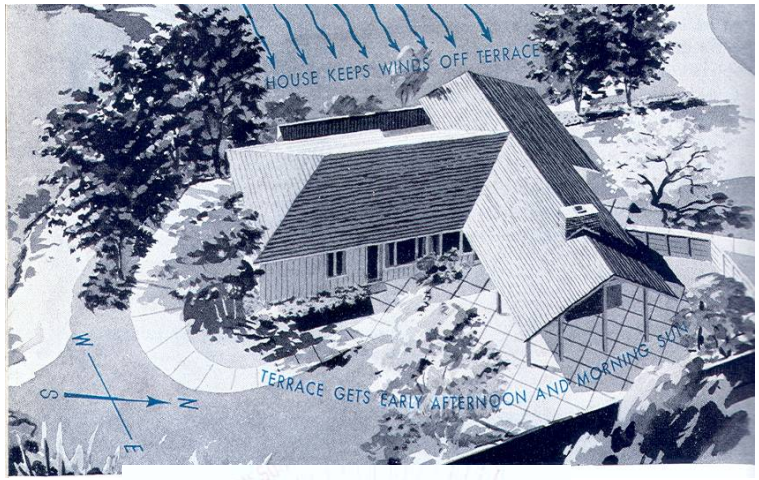

Architect: Edwin Wadsworth
Original Client: speculative
Construction Date: 1950

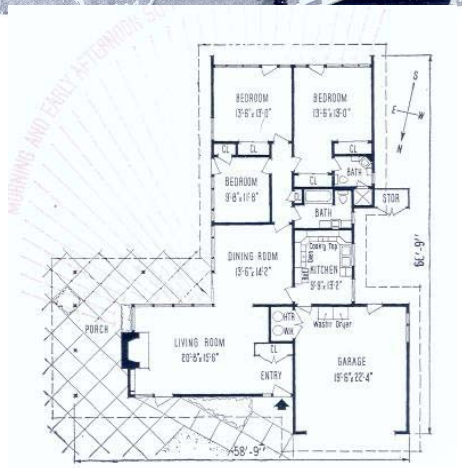
Assistant Designers: Germano A. Milano
Interiors: Warde Corley for W&J Sloane (San Francisco)
Landscape Design: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: David D. Bohannon Organization
Square Footage: 1,600
Street Address: Hillsdale Boulevard and Alameda de las Pulgas
*House Beautiful* photos: renderings only
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1950a**
San Mateo, California
Edwin Wadsworth
*House Beautiful* June 1950


S
EDITORS' NOTE: We believe these houses are so significant that we present the above house in detail in this issue, the two others in subsequent issues.



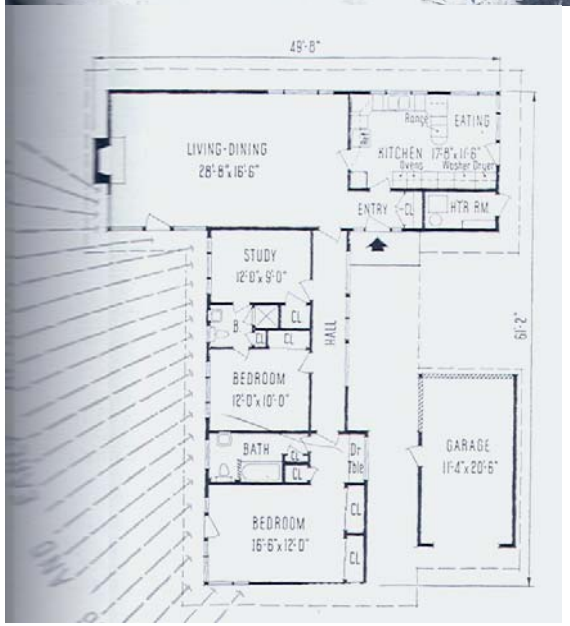



Designer: Marcus Stedman
Original Client: speculative
Construction Date: 1950

Assistant Architect: Edwin Wadsworth
Consulting Architect: Germano Milano
Interiors: Warde Corley for W&J Sloane (San Francisco)
Landscape Design: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: David D. Bohannon Organization
Square Footage: ca. 1,600
Street Address: Hillsdale Boulevard and Alameda de las Pulgas
*House Beautiful* photos: renderings only
*Extant*

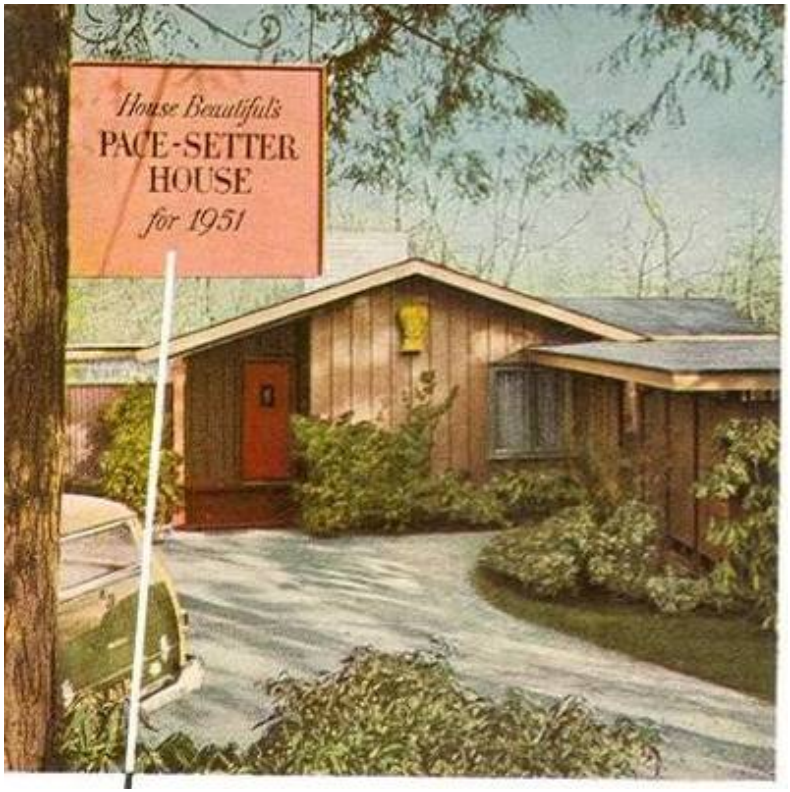
**Pace Setter 1950b**
San Mateo, California
Marcus Stedman & Edwin Wadsworth
*House Beautiful* July 1950




Architect: Edwin Wadsworth
Original Client: speculative
Construction Date: 1950

Consulting Architect: Germano Milono
Interiors: Warde Corley for W&J Sloane (San Francisco)
Landscape Design: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: David D. Bohannon Organization
Square Footage: ca. 1,600
Street Address: Hillsdale Boulevard and Alameda de las Pulgas
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1950c**
San Mateo, California
Edwin Wadsworth
*House Beautiful* September 1950

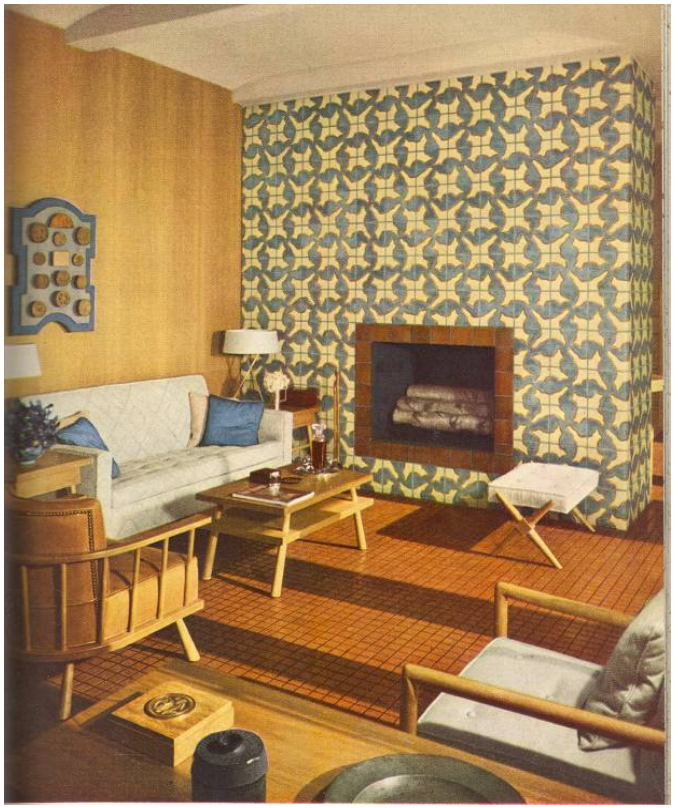


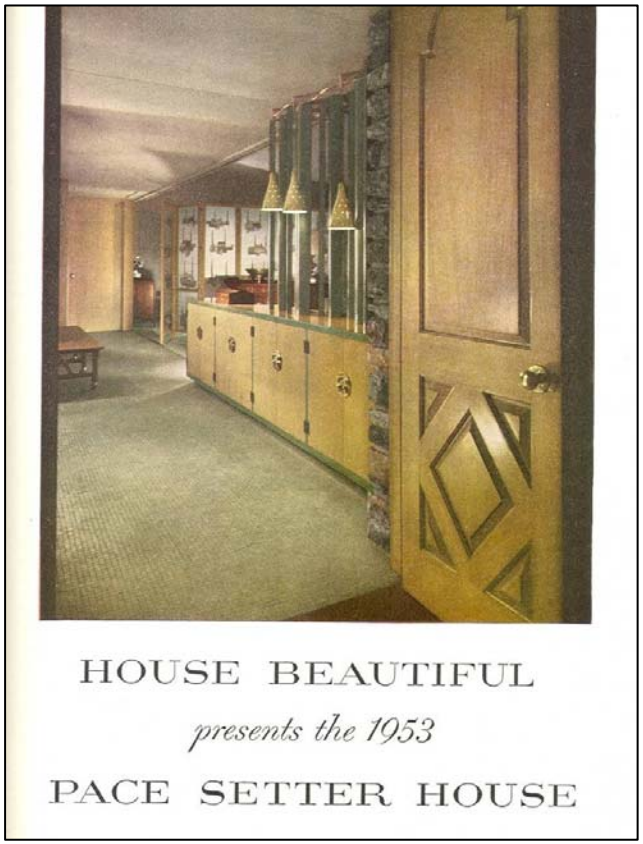

Architect: Julius Gregory
Original Client: speculative
Construction Date: 1950

Furnishings: T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings; Edward Wormley; Kenneth Volz
Fabrics: John Jacoby
Tile: Lucio Costa
Textiles: Mariska Karasz
Color Stylist: William Manker
Landscape Design: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: Robert Chuckrow Construction Company
Square Footage: 1,733 enclosed living; 1,122 ancillary (porch, garage, basement, breezeway)
Street Address: 57 Judson Avenue
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1951**
Dobbs Ferry, New York
Julius Gregory
*House Beautiful* May 1951


DRAWING BY GEORGE COOPER RUDOLPH AND ASSOCIATES

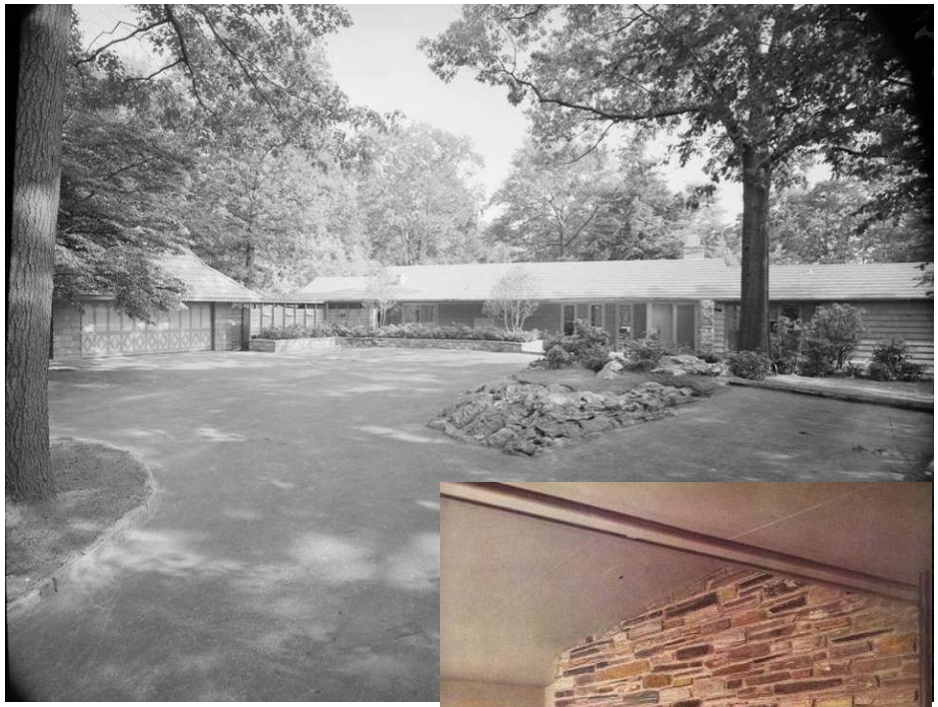


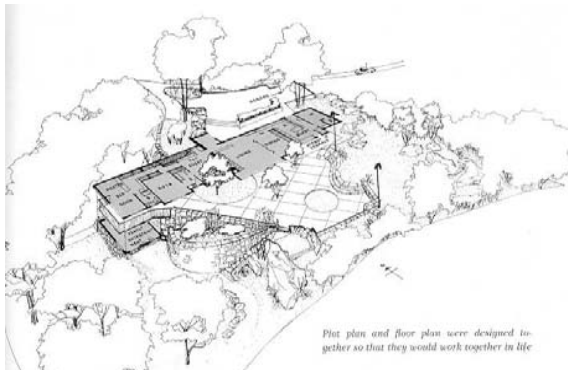



Architect: Henry Eggers & Walter Wilkman
Original Client: Richard and Dorothy Hoefer (publisher of *House Beautiful*)
Construction Date: 1951

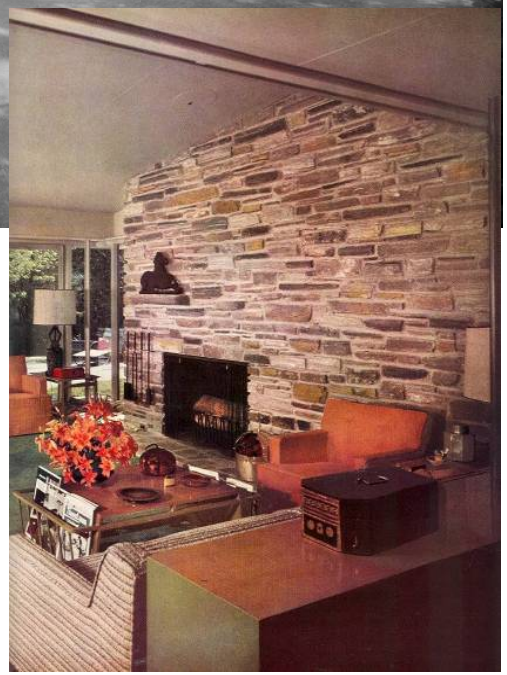
Supervising Architect: Lee Schoen
Furnishing: William Pahlman
Textiles: Mariska Karasz
Color Stylist: William Manker
Landscape Design: Thomas Church
Builder / Contractor: Westchester Construction
Heating Engineer: Henry N. Wright
Square Footage: ca. 2,500
Street Address: 28 Valley Road
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

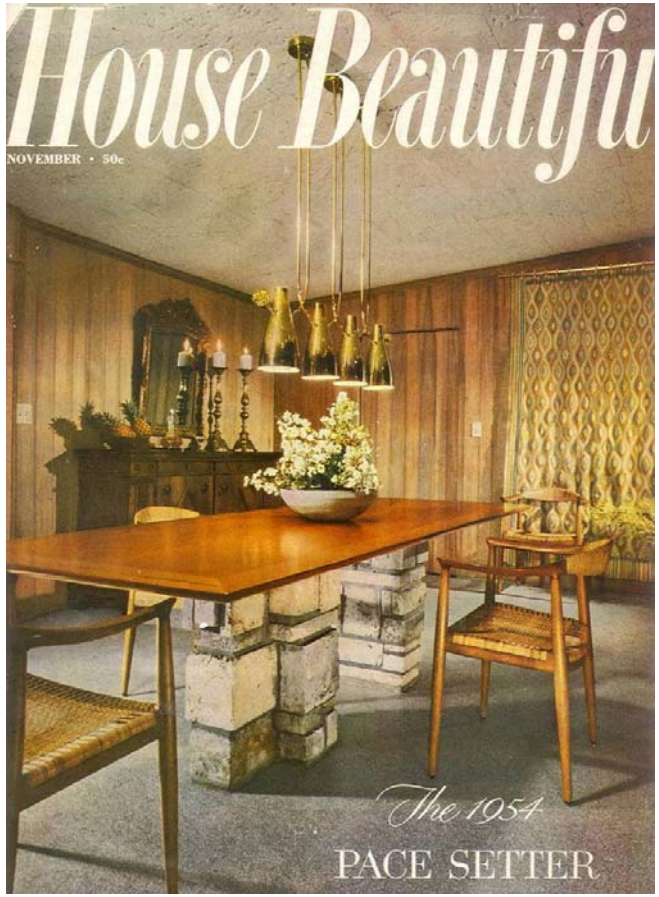
**Pace Setter 1953**
Bronxville, New York
Henry Eggers
*House Beautiful* November 1952





Plot plan and floor plan were designed together so that they would work together in life






Architect: Alfred Browning Parker

Original Client: Alfred Browning Parker and Martha Gifford Parker

Construction Date: 1953

Interiors: Parker, with Laura Tanner of *House Beautiful*

Textiles: Mariska Karasz; Martha Parker

Builder / Contractor: Alfred Browning Parker

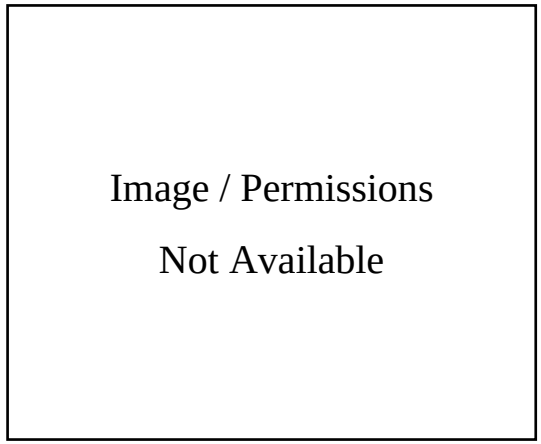
Square Footage: indoor living 3,161; outdoor living 2,800; 910 ancillary space

Street Address: 3187 Royal Road

*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller

*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1954**
Coral Gables, Florida
Alfred Browning Parker
*House Beautiful* November 1953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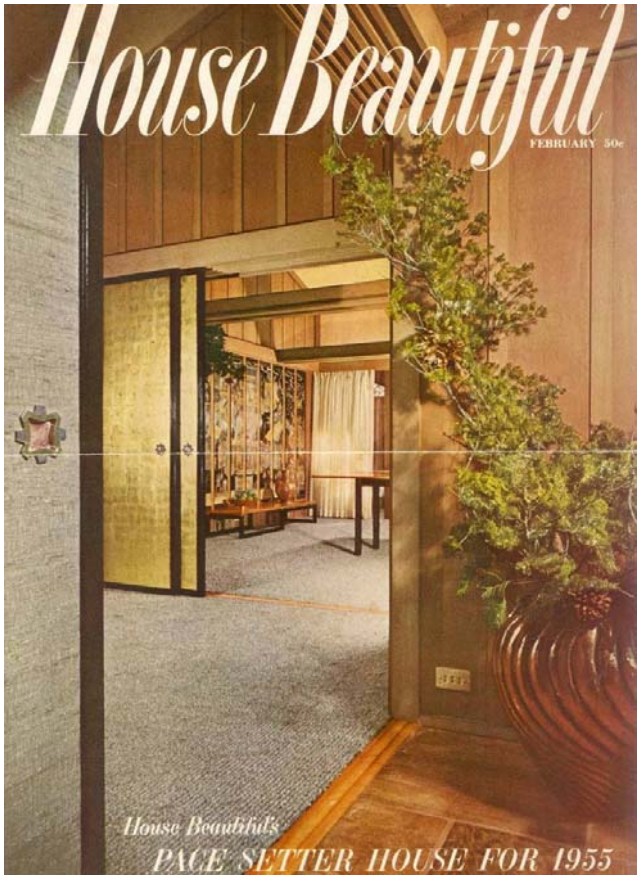



Architect: Harwell Hamilton Harris

Original Client: Texas State Fair and *House Beautiful*

Construction Date: 1955

Assistant Designers: University of Texas School of Architecture Students: David Brown Barrow, Jr.; Patrick Swearingen Chumney; William E. Hoff; Neal T. Lacey; Don Legge; Heldor Nielson, Austin

Interiors: William McFadden, Dallas; *House Beautiful* staff

Landscape Design: Marie & Arthur Berger, Dallas

Builder / Contractor: Dallas Home Builders Association, Joe Maberry

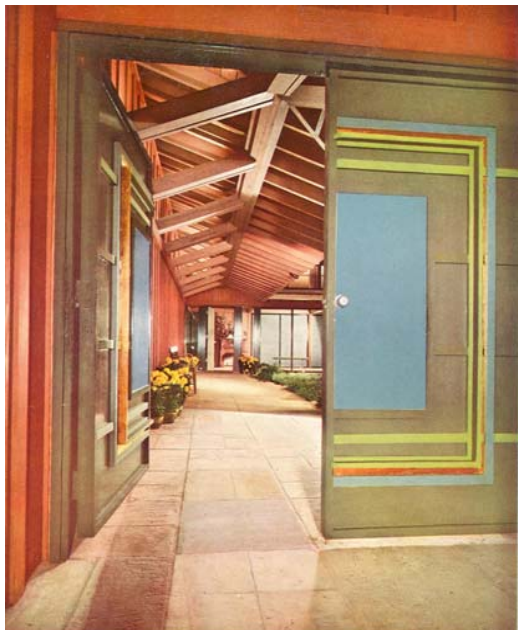
Square Footage: ca. 3,000

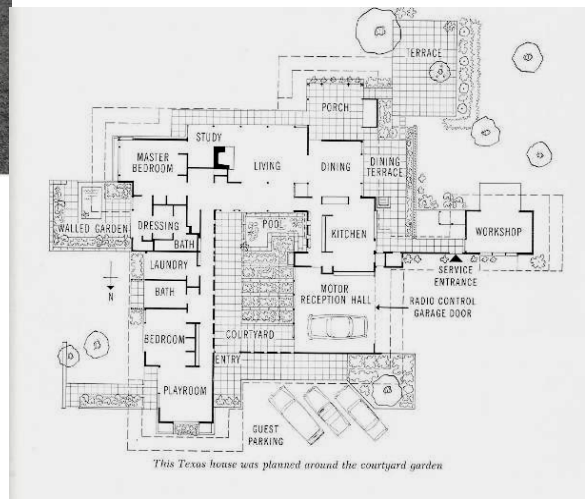
Street Address: Fair Park, Dallas; moved to 13030 Stonebrook Circle.

*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker

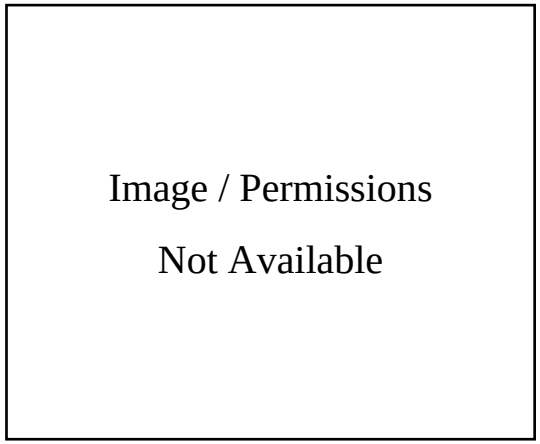
*Demolished*

**Pace Setter 1955**
Dallas, Texas
Harwell Hamilton Harris
with University of Texas School of Architecture
*House Beautiful* February 1955





*This Texas house was planned around the courtyard garden*




Architect: Alfred Browning Parker
Original Client: Bert Friedman

Construction Date: 1954

Interiors: Alfred Browning Parker
Textiles: Boris Kroll Fabrics, New York
Builder / Contractor: E.J. Rourke, Miami
Square Footage: ca. 1,000
Street Address: none given
*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1956 (mini)**
Miami, Florida
Alfred Browning Parker
*House Beautiful* February 1956

Image / Permissions

Not Available

Image / Permissions

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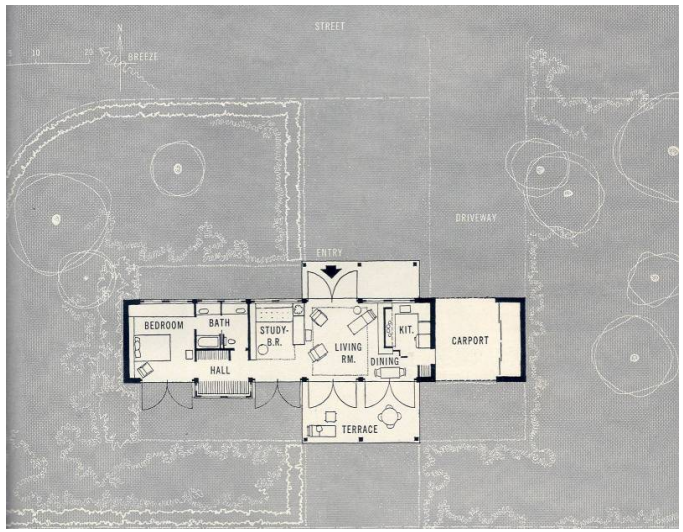

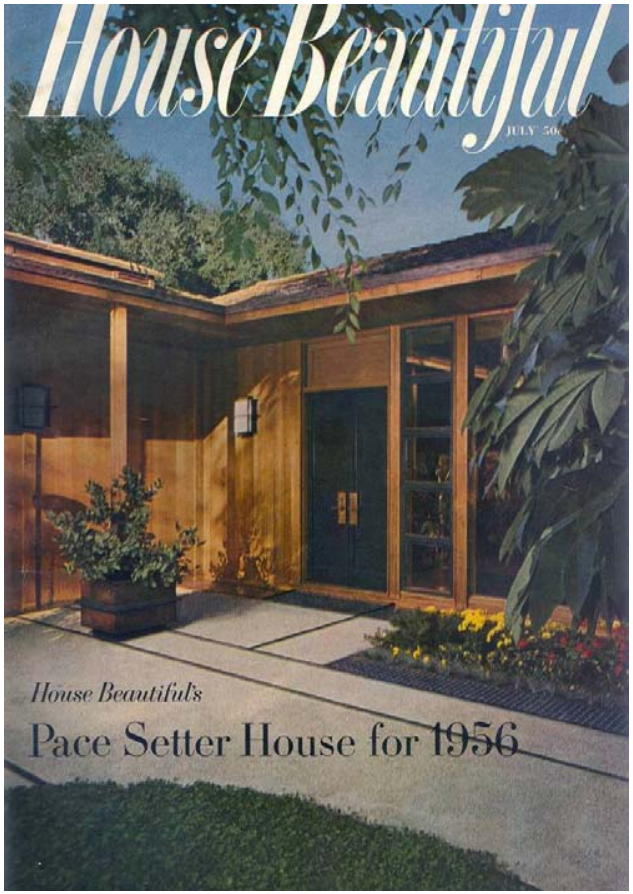


Architect: Morgan Stedman
Original Client: none given
Construction Date: remodel, 1956

Assistant Architects: Stedman & Williams
Landscape Design: Kathryn Imlay Stedman
Interiors: Gump's; Eleanor Foprbes & Gorden Mills; Jeanette Kapstein; Textiles: Boris Kroll Fabrics, New York
Square Footage: none given
Street Address: none given
*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller

**Pace Setter 1956**
San Francisco area, California
Morgan Stedman
*House Beautiful* July 1956

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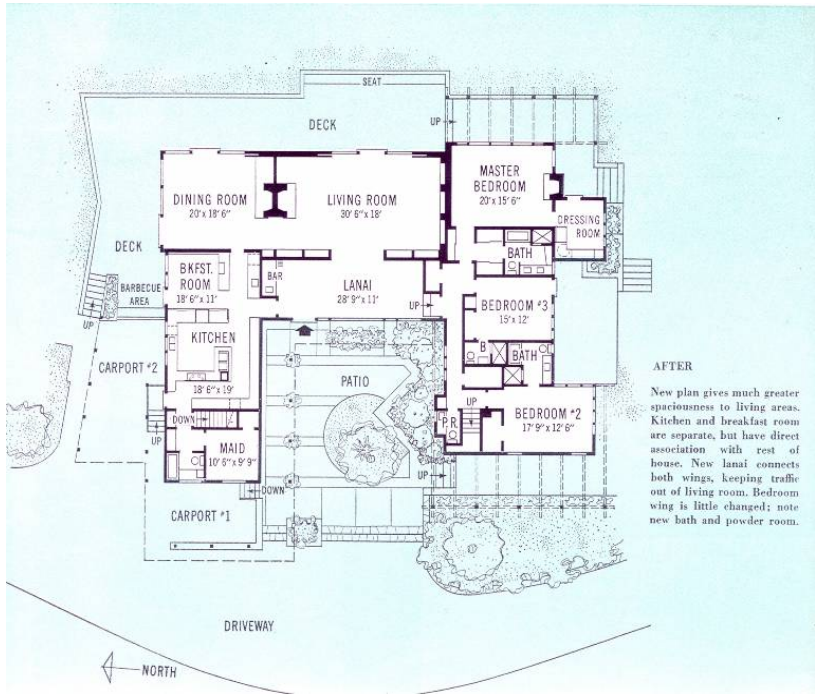
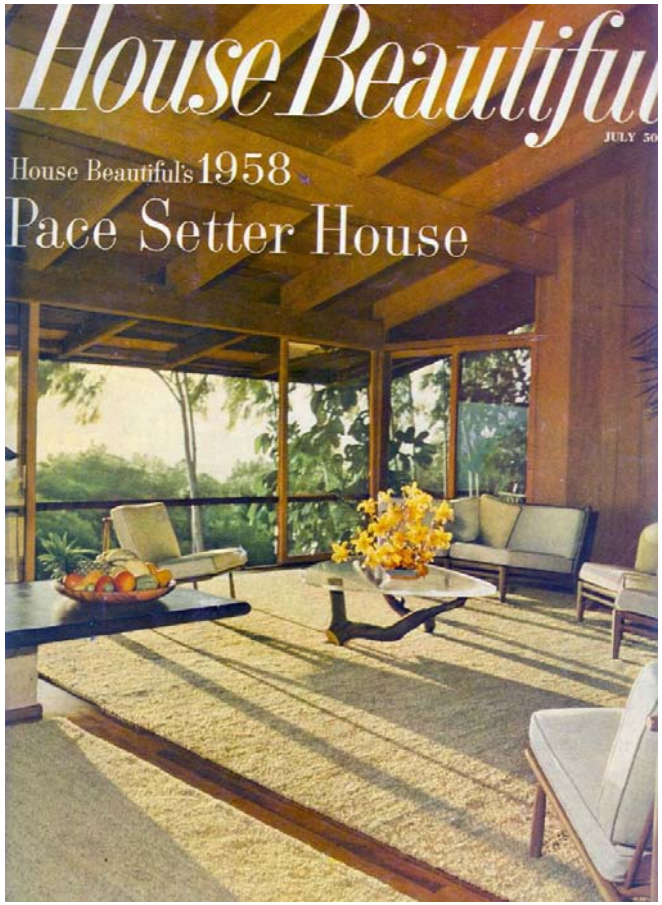
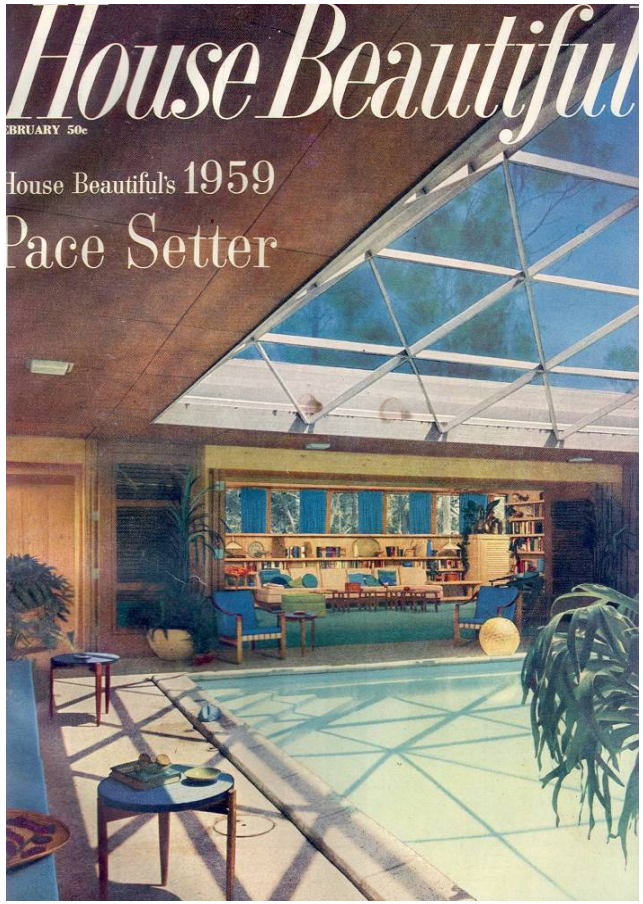





Architect: Vladimir Ossipoff
Original Client: Howard and Betty Liljestrand
Construction Date: 1952

Landscape Design: Robert O. Thompson & Catherine Jones Thompson
Square Footage: ca. 3,500
Street Address: Mount Tantalus Drive
*House Beautiful* photos: Charles Yerkes, Maynard Parker Studio
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1958**
Honolulu, Hawaii
Vladimir Ossipoff
*House Beautiful* July 1958




Architect: Alfred Browning Parker
Original Client: Mr. and Mrs. Graham Miller
Construction Date: 1959

Interior Decoration: House Beautiful staff
Square Footage: living 3,100; screened areas and court 1,600
Street Address: none given
*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller
***Extant***

**Pace Setter 1959**
Coconut Grove, Florida
Alfred Browning Parker
*House Beautiful* February 1959

Image / Permissions

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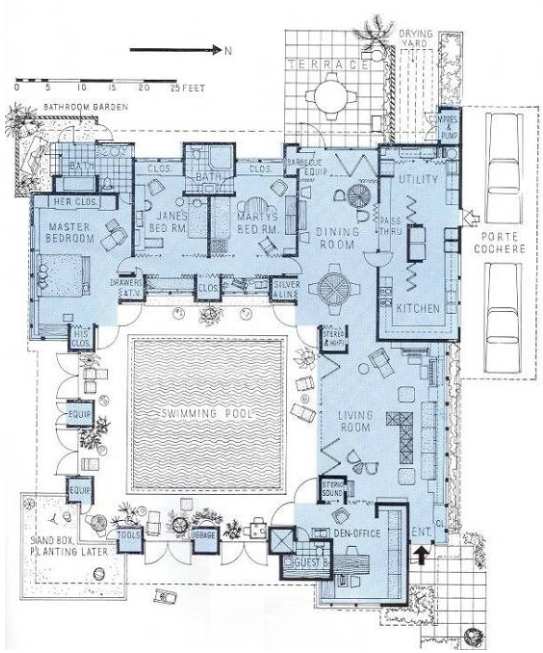
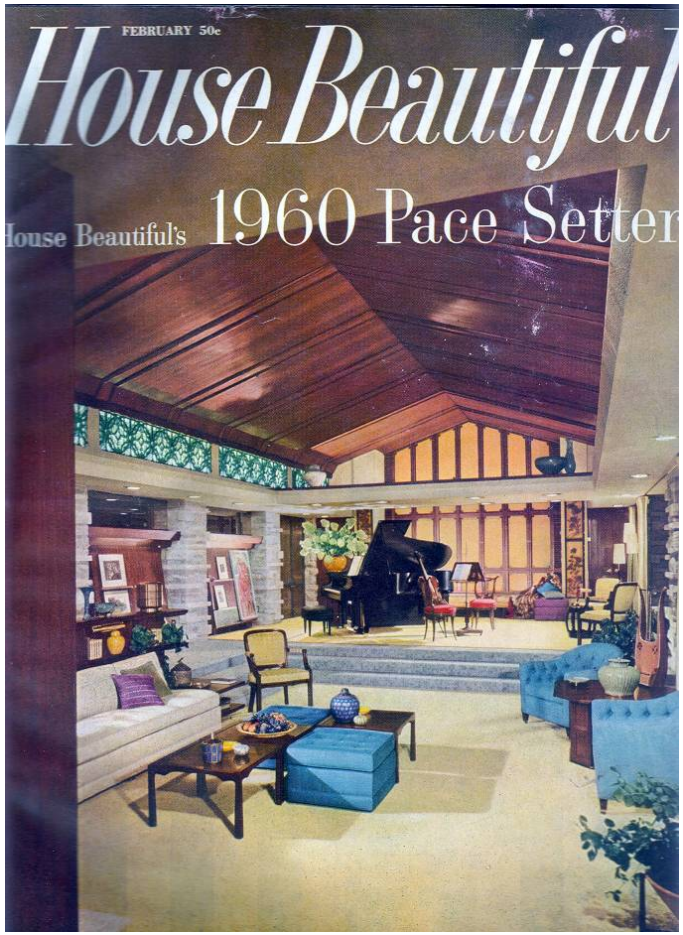





Designer: John deKoven Hill

Original Client: J. Ralph and Patricia Corbett

Construction Date: 1959

Associate architects: John W. Geiger; Paul L. Soderburg

Supervising Architect: Thomas H. Landise, Jr.

Landscape Architect: Henry Fletcher Kenney

Construction: J & E Warm Company; Stanley Cohen, supervisor

Interior Decoration: John deKoven Hill, with House Beautiful staff

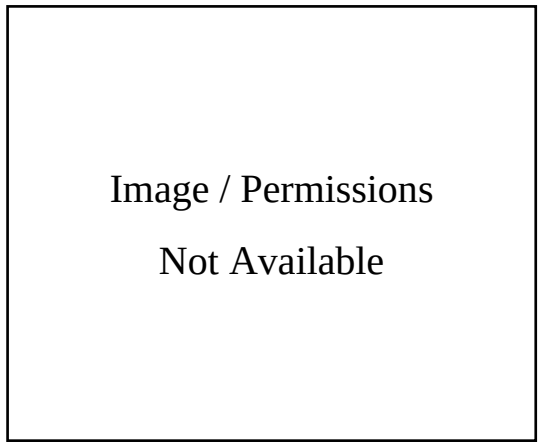
Square Footage: ca. 3,500

Street Address: 2501 Grandin Road

*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller

*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1960**
Cincinnati, Ohio
John deKoven Hill
*House Beautiful* February 1960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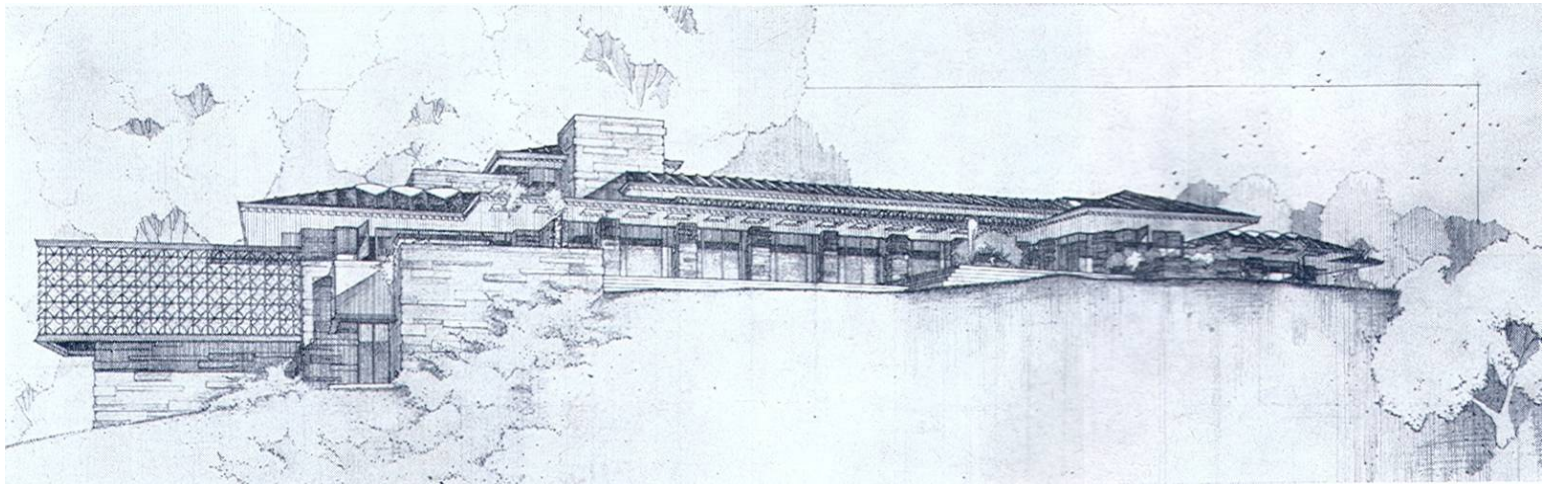
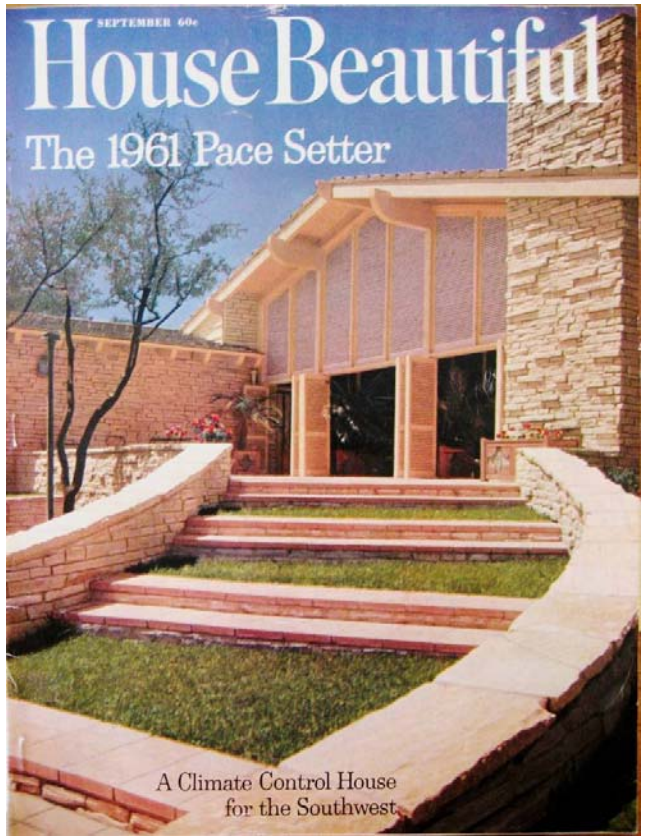
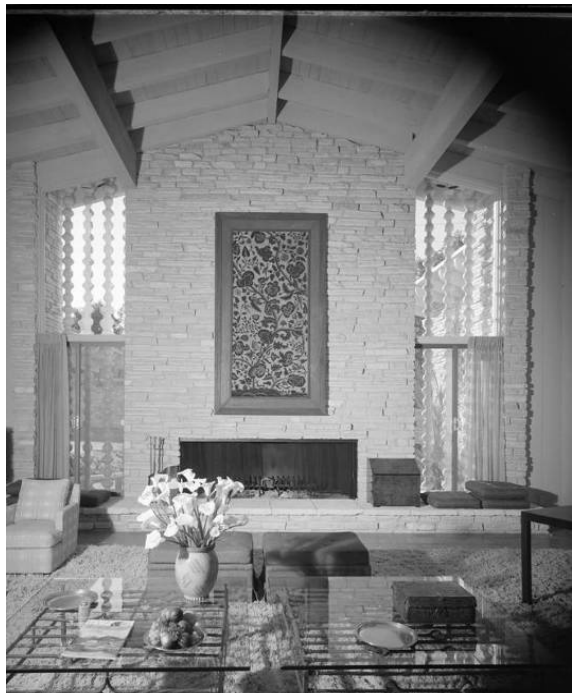


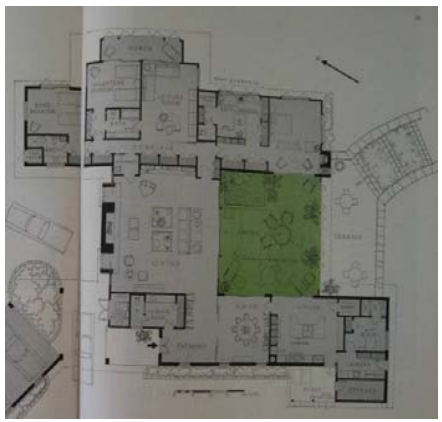


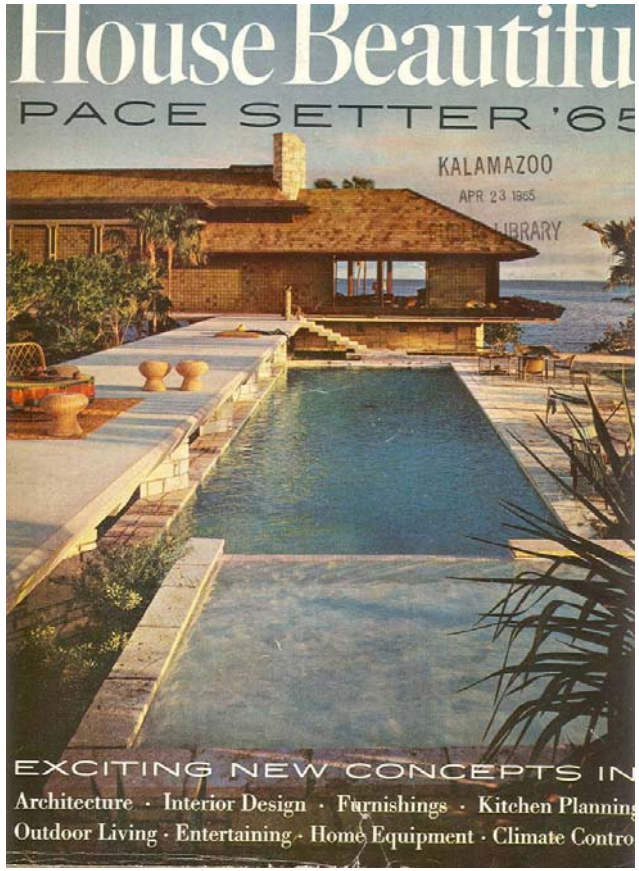

Designer: Roger Rasbach
Original Client: *House Beautiful*; Hugh Halff, Jr.
Construction Date: 1960-61

Interiors: Norman McD. Foster, with *House Beautiful* staff
Landscape Design: Arthur and Marie Berger
Builder / Contractor: Barnett Development Company
Square Footage: 6,553 enclosed
Street Address: 9022 Callaghan Road
*House Beautiful* photos: Maynard Parker
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1961**
San Antonio, Texas
Roger Rasbach
*House Beautiful* September 1961








Architect: Alfred Browning Parker
Original Client: Alfred Browning Parker
Construction Date: 1964

Interiors: Parker, with Laura Tanner of *House Beautiful*
Builder / Contractor: Alfred Browning Parker
Landscape Architect: Jonathan Seymour
Square Footage: ca. 6,000
Street Address: Gables Estates
*House Beautiful* photos: Ezra Stoller
*Extant*

**Pace Setter 1965**
Coral Gables, Florida
Alfred Browning Parker
*House Beautiful* May 1965

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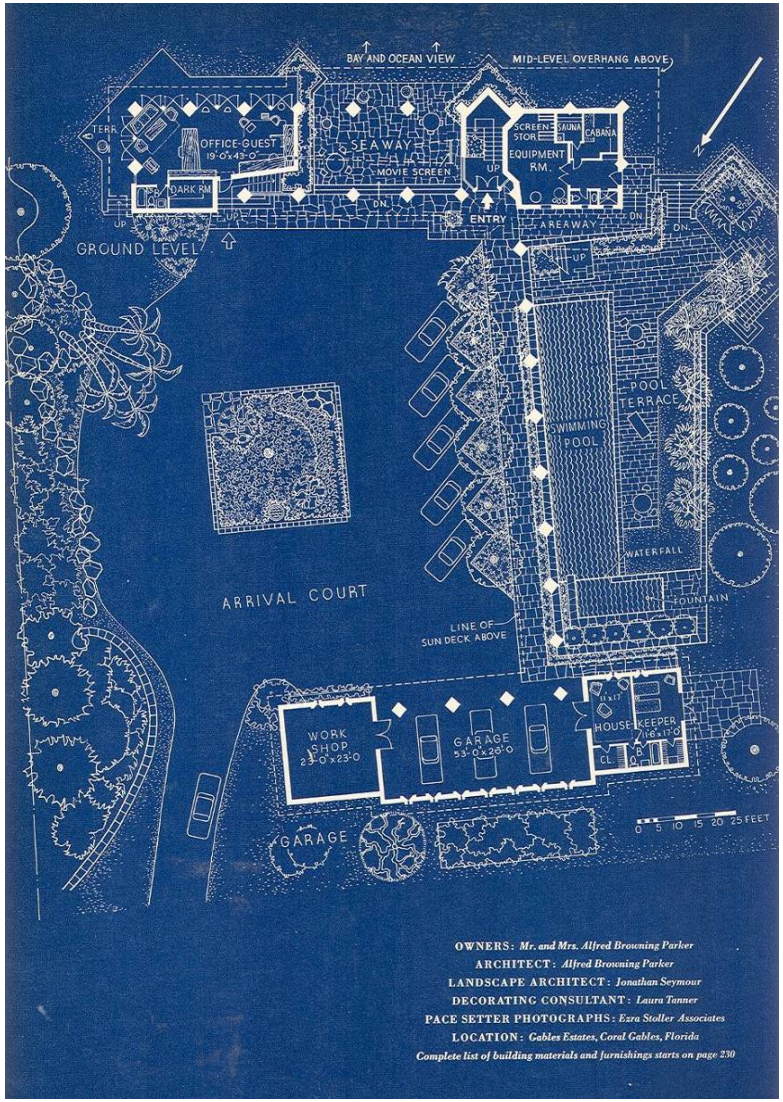

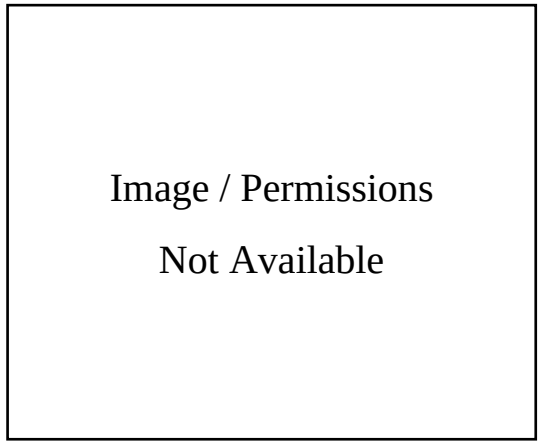
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## Appendix B: Catalog of Pace Setter Architects

## (alphabetical)

1. Henry Eggers, Pace Setter 1953
2. Julius Gregory, Pace Setter 1951
3. Harwell Hamilton Harris, Pace Setter 1955
4. John DeKoven Hill, Pace Setter 1960
5. Cliff May, Pace Setter Prologue 1946, and Pace Setter 1948
6. Vladimir Ossipoff, Pace Setter 1958
7. Alfred Browning Parker, Pace Setters 1954, 1956, 1959 and 1965
8. Roger Rasbach, Pace Setter 1961
9. Emil A. Schmidlin, Pace Setter 1949
10. Morgan Stedman, Pace Setter 1956
11. Edwin A. Wadsworth, Pace Setter 1950

**Henry L. Eggers**

(1911-1997)

Henry Lawrence Eggers was born on 12 May 1911 in Denver, Colorado. He graduated from East Denver High School in 1927, and went on to earn a Bachelor's of Architecture at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York in 1933. While he was still an undergraduate, he served as an apprentice for J.B. Benedict in Denver, from 1928 to 1933. After graduation, Eggers worked as a designer for the United States Bureau of Reclamations in Denver, executing dam and power house projects for the Morris, Wheeler, Grand Coulee, Shasta, and Parker Dams. In 1936, Eggers moved to Los Angeles, where he worked as a draftsman and designer for Gordon B. Kaufmann. After three years, he was promoted to an associate in the firm, which became Gordon B. Kaufmann Associates, and later Kaufmann, Lippincott & Eggers. In 1945, he left Kaufmann to form his own practice. By 1947, he had partnered with his former Kaufmann colleague Walter Wilkman (a graduate of the Wentworth Institute, Boston Architectural Center, and MIT) to form Eggers & Wilkman. The firm was headquartered in Los Angeles, and was in business until 1966.

Eggers had a great interest in improving architectural education, and in 1954 participated in a panel on curriculum reform with Richard Neutra. He was also a Visiting Critic for the fifth year design studio at the University of Southern California's College of Architecture from 1953 to 1956. His interest in the history of architecture was exemplified by his tremendous effort, with Jean Murray Bangs and Harwell Hamilton

Harris, to preserve the architectural drawings of Greene & Greene, and to have their extant work photographed. Eggers commissioned architectural photographer Maynard Parker for this project.

Though he never published a statement of his theory, Eggers commented in his FAIA application statement of 1955 that he had constantly sought to "retain timeless values of good architecture materially and emotionally," to provide "stimulating and congenial shelter for each individual owner," and to "combine the traditional principles of good design with contemporary techniques gracefully and with warmth." His colleagues, such as W.L. Pereira, recognized him for his "integrity and skill," and, in the words of Herbert J. Powell, he was regarded as "a fine gentleman."

Eggers was primarily know for his luxury residential designs, as his FAIA nomination indicated. Among his most noted works were the Arthur O. Hanisch Residence, Pasadena, 1950, for which he won the Southern California Chapter AIA Honor Award in 1951; the Henry Dreyfuss Residence, Pasadena, 1952; and *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1953 (the Richard Hoefer Residence, Bronxville, NY, 1952)

Eggers married Florence Allegra McAllister in Los Angeles in 1940, and the couple had two sons (Henry V. and Laurence Paxson), and one daughter (Ann Allister). He was a member of the AIA, and was elected as a Fellow in 1956. Eggers retired in 1970, and died in 1997.

**Major Works (selected)**

Arthur O. Hanisch Residence, Pasadena, 1950

Henry Dreyfuss Residence, Pasadena, 1952

Richard Hoefer Residence, Bronxville, NY, 1952

William Kroger Residence, Bel Air, 1955

Robert Windfohr Gallery and Pavilion, Fort Worth, 1955

Claremont College Faculty Club, Claremont, CA, 1955

Steel Demonstration House, Building Contractors Association at Los Angeles County Fair, Pomona, 1955

Clinic for Carmapa Company

Henry Eggers House, Pasadena

Harvey Mud House

Herbert Johnson Residence, Racine, Wisconsin

**Bibliographic Note:**

No major repository for Henry Eggers has been uncovered. A small number of photographs are located in the Maynard Parker Collection, and drawings and images of the Faculty Club are held at Claremont College. Limited biographical information was available through his FAIA application in the AIA Archives, and through the *American Architects Directory*. Other information was gathered through the *Los Angeles Times*, and other periodical entries.

**Archival Sources**

American Institute of Architects, Library & Archives, Washington D.C.; Vertical file for Henry Eggers.

Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library, The Libraries of The Claremont Colleges. Claremont Colleges Photograph Collection. "Faculty Clulb (sic) - Claremont College." 1954. Preliminary sketch for the Faculty House. Text reads: "Faculty Club - Claremont College - Henry L. Eggers & Walter W. Wilkman Architects- Malcolm Cameron - Associate Architect. Claremont Colleges' Photograph Collection - http://ccdl.libraries.claremont.edu/col/ccp.

Parker, Maynard. Maynard Parker Collection. Huntington Research Library. San Marino, CA. Pace Setter Images.

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General

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1944

"House in Pasadena." *California Arts & Architecture* 61 (Nov 1944): 22-23.

1948

Advertisement, concrete commercial building. *LAT* 19 Nov 1948

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1951

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1952

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"A changing room for growing boys." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 240-242.

"A freer way to make a living-dining room." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 202-03.

"Don't walk – talk." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 236-237.

"Good summer ventilation is no accident." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 248-49, 254.

"Hardware and lighting fixtures – the jewelry of the modern house." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 252.

"*House Beautiful* presents the 1953 Pace Setter House." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 199.

"How to build a MODERN house in an OLD neighborhood." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 210-211.

"How to make a terrace a climate-control tool." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 216-218.

"How to make your home your personal expression." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 204-205.

"Mark of a MODERN house – the paved terrace." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 219-221.

"PACE SETTER construction combines the best of old and new." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 238-239, 318.

"The key to Pace-Setting living – Plan outdoors and indoors as one working whole." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 224-225.

"The Master Suite – private world within a world." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 226-232.

"Fabrics set the pace for your creative embroidery." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 234-35, 288.

"The New Kind of Living Room" *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 200-201.

"The Pace Setter sets a new high in insulation." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 246-47, 341.

"This PACE SETTER is at peace with nature." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 208-209, 353, 354.

"To be continued in our next." *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952):250-51.

"What is a really de-luxe heating plant for 1953?" *House Beautiful* 94 (Nov 1952): 244-45, 266.

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1953

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1954

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"Plans for BCA Model Home at Fair Lauded." *LAT* 14 Aug 1955.

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1956

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1961

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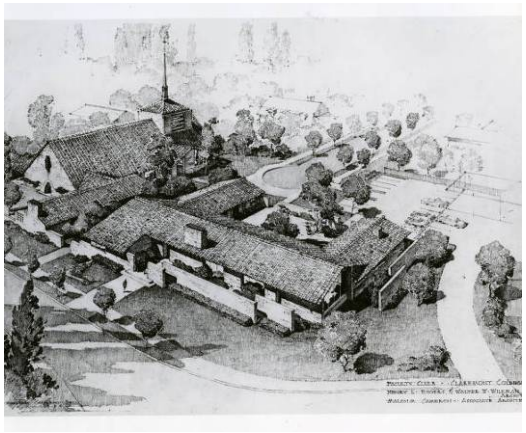
**Henry Eggers, Illustrations of Selected Works**



Claremont College Faculty Club, Claremont, California, 1955

Claremont College Faculty Club, Claremont, CA, 1955

**Julius Gregory**

(1875-1955)

Born in Sacramento, California in 1875, Julius Gregory studied Mechanical Engineering at the University of California. In 1911, he moved to New York, and found employment in the atelier of Harvey Wiley Corbett. He left Corbett to join Buchman & Kahn, where he was a partner from 1918 to 1920. In 1920, Gregory established his own practice, with offices on Park Avenue in Manhattan. He later moved to Madison Avenue, not far from *House Beautiful* offices where he was, at the time, a consulting architect.

Gregory served as a consultant for *House & Garden* in the 1930s, for *Good Housekeeping*, and for *House Beautiful*. He had been in practice for forty-two years when he retired in 1953. Gregory was noted for his posh residential commissions, such as his design for the famed pediatricians and art collectors Drs. Ruth Morris and Harry Bakwin in Ossining, New York. Ruth Morris Bakwin, heiress to two Chicago meat-packing fortunes (Armour and Swift), and her husband Harry decorated their home with a stunning collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artwork, including Van Gogh's *L'Arlesienne*, *Madame Ginoux* (which sold at Christie's upon her death). Gregory's other notable homes include a 1944 residence for *House Beautiful* editor Elizabeth Gordon and her husband Carl Norcross, and Alfred Knopf's Purchase, New York home. Gregory was chosen as the architect for *House & Garden*'s "Ideal House" in 1937 (Scarsdale, New York), and *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House for 1951, possibly his last commission. Gregory also designed a number of churches in New York,

including the Church of All Nations (2nd Avenue) and Calvary Church. His New York Times obituary from 1955 described him as a "transitional architect…often adapting newer concepts to traditional styles…a bridge to the designs of later, modern architects." Gregory was a member of the AIA from 1921 and of the Architectural League of New York. He was elected a Fellow of the AIA. He married Mary Lovrein Price, and lived in Scarsdale, New York. They adopted two sons, Jules (1921-1985; FAIA) and Alfred (1922-?). Gregory died in 1955.

**Major Works (selected)**

C.E. Chambers House, Riverdale, New York, 1920.

House of Clarence McDaniel, Hartsdale, New York, ca. 1921.

House of David S. Ball, Esq., Riverdale, New York, ca. 1922.

House of Mrs. Mary Mckelvey, Spuyten Duyvil, New York., ca. 1922.

Residence, J.P. Dargan, Jr., Hartsdale, New York ca. 1922.

Church of All Nations (9 Second Avenue), New York, ca. 1923.

House of Charles Henry Wilson, Pelham, New York, 1924.

House of Robert M. Haig, Riverdale, New York, 1925.

Calvary Methodist Church (1885 University Avenue, the Bronx), New York, 1926.

House of Frank Bannerman, Scarsdale, New York, 1926.

Sunny Ridge House, Harrison, New York, 1927.

Julius Gregory House, Scarsdale, New York, 1928.

House of Dr. Hollis Dann, Douglaston Manor, L.I., New York 1928.

House of Louis Wilputte, New Rochelle, New York 1929.

House of Sidney H. Sonn, Sunny Ridge, Harrison, New York, ca. 1929.

House of Henry Heide, Jr., Riverdale, New York, 1929.

Methodist Episcopal Church, Farmingdale, Long Island, New York, ca. 1929.

Methodist Episcopal Home for the Aged, New York, 1929.

Residence of Dr. Dudley H. Morris, Fieldston, New York, 1929.

Residence Of Mrs. Thomas O'Hara, Long Island, New York, ca. 1929.

House of Mrs. J. William Lewis, Rye, New York, 1930.

*Country Life* house, R.P. Stevens, ca. 1930.

Home of Raymond K. Stritzinger at Scarsdale, New York, 1931.

House of Helen Willoughby Smith, Darien, Connecticut, 1932.

Residence of Mr. Harry Parker at Darien, Connecticut., 1932.

Home of Hugh Mcnair, Great Neck, Long Island, New York, 1934.

House of Frank E. Wilder, Old Greenwich, Connecticut, 1934.

Robert E. Hill, Fieldston, New York, 1934.

House for Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Knopf, Purchase, New York, n.d.

Drs. Ruth and Harry Bakwin, Ossining, New York, n.d.

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**Bibliographic Note**

Though Gregory was a noted architect and had a long career, his papers have not been uncovered. There is a small selection of photographs in the Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, but little else. Scant biographical information was provided to the AIA after his death by his son Jules (FAIA), and several obituaries have provided the remainder of the information.

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Baldwin Memorial Archive of American Architects, "Julius Gregory."

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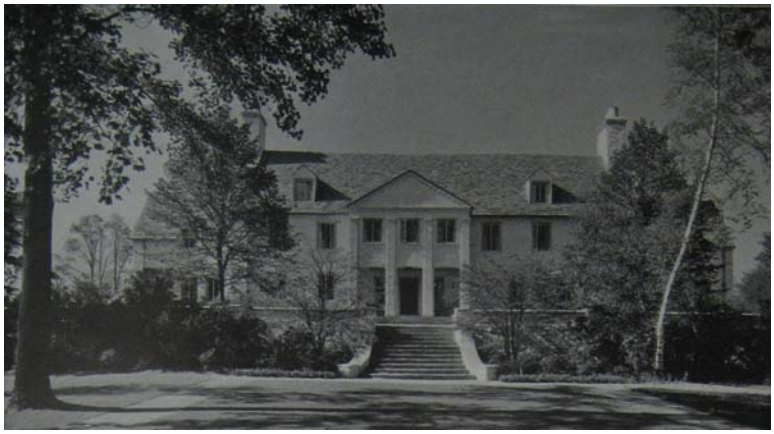
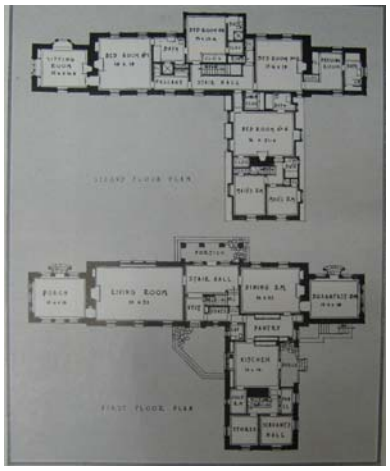
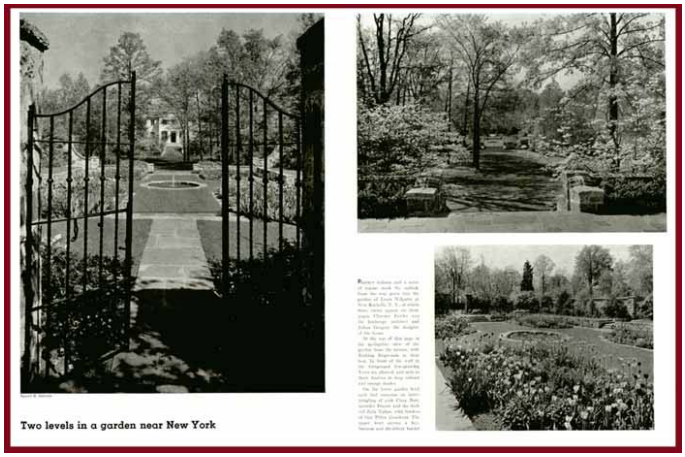


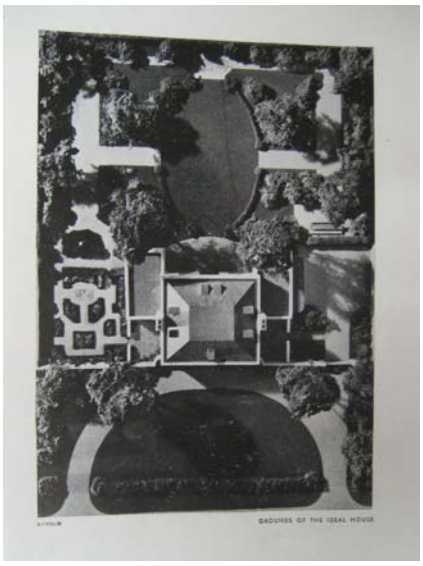
Louis Wilputte House, (*House & Garden* Aug 1930)

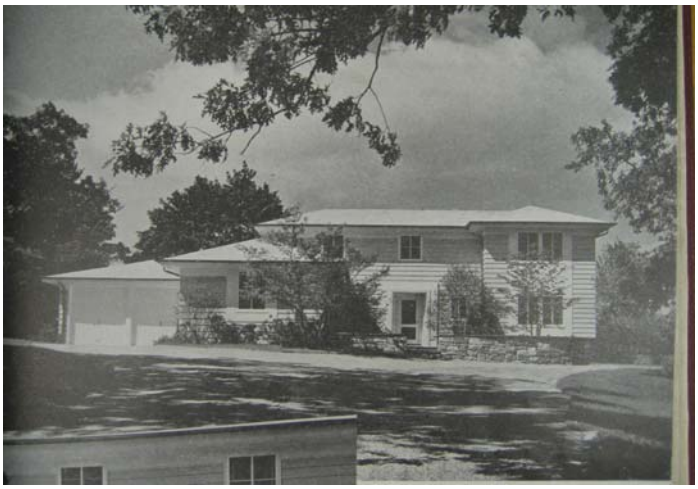




Two levels in a garden near New York

Ideal House, (*House & Garden* Apr 1937)





House for Elizabeth Gordon and Carl Norcross,
(*Architectural Forum* Aug 1945)


**Harwell Hamilton Harris**

(1903-1990)

Born in 1903 in Redlands, California, Harwell Hamilton Harris grew up in Southern California. He attended San Bernardino High School, and graduated in 1921. Harris studied sculpture and painting at the Otis Institute of Art in Los Angeles from 1923 to 1925. He was inspired to study architecture after a visit to Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House in Los Angeles, and enrolled in the architecture program at the University of California at Berkeley. Before his formal education commenced, he met Richard Neutra, and was hired as an apprentice in his Los Angeles office. Harris worked for Neutra, alongside Gregory Ain, until 1933. In 1933, Harris established his own architectural practice. His first commissions were for small houses, such as the Pauline Lowe House. His practice grew after he won *House Beautiful*'s Small House Competition in 1936, and after his 1940-41 Havens House in Berkeley received nationwide attention in major architectural periodicals. During World War II, when architectural commissions were in short supply, Harris and his wife Jean Murray Bangs (they had married in 1937) moved to New York, where Harris designed for Donald Deskey and taught courses at Columbia University. In 1944, Harris returned to California and resumed his professional practice. In 1952, he was hired as the Dean for the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, where he served until 1955. During this time, with the "Texas Rangers" Colin Rowe, John Hejduk, Robert Slutsky, Werner Seligmann, and Herbert Hirsche, Harris was instrumental in reforming architectural education. The

Rangers, with Harris in the lead, introduced pedagogical strategies that countered the ingrained tradition of Beaux-Arts education in the United States. In 1954, Harris collaborated with a team of advanced architecture students from the University of Texas to design and build a full-scale exhibition house for the Texas State Fair in Dallas; the home was selected as *House Beautiful'*s Pace Setter for 1955. After Harris left the University of Texas, he opened a practice in Dallas. In 1962, he was hired to teach architecture at North Carolina State University in Raleigh; he taught for over a decade there, until his retirement in 1973. Harris retired from his architectural practice in 1975. Harris was a member of the AIA, and was elected as a Fellow in 1965. He died in 1990.

**Major Works (selected)**

Pauline Lowe House, Altadena, California, 1933

Harwell Hamilton Harris House, "Fellowship Park," Los Angeles, 1935

John Entenza House, Santa Monica, 1937

Weston Havens House, Berkeley, 1939-41

Cranfill House, Austin, Texas, 1952

House Beautiful Pace Setter House (Texas State Fair House), Dallas, 1954-55

Ruth Carter Stevenson House, Fort Worth, 1955

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For a comprehensive monograph on Harris, including a complete biography, bibliography, and list of built works, exhibitions, and projects, see Lisa Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991.

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"The Daughter's Room." *House Beautiful* 97 (Feb 1955): 90-91.

"The Family Playroom for young and old." *House Beautiful* 97 (Feb 1955): 92-93.

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"The Working Wall is…" *House Beautiful* 97 (Feb 1955): 100-101.

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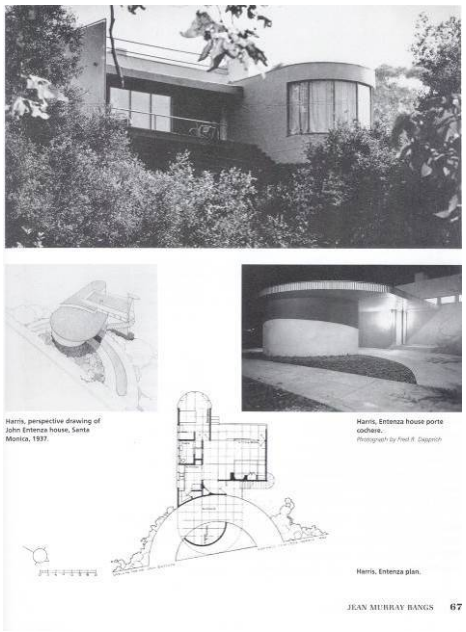


Entenza House, Los Angeles, 1937

**John deKoven Hill**

(1920-1996)

John deKoven Hill was born on 19 May 1920 in Cleveland, Ohio, the only child of John deKoven Hill, Sr., and Helen Muckley Hill. Hill's father was a journalist from Manhattan, who later worked in advertising sales and publishing for the Curtis Publishing Company. Hill's mother Helen, descended from a Bavarian family in the Pennsylvania Dutch farm country, worked as a newspaper editor for the women's pages in Cleveland, and later attempted a career in writing. Hill spent most of his youth in the suburbs of Chicago, first in Wilmette and later in Evanston. He developed a strong interest in architecture, through his architect uncle John Gillette. Though he originally intended to study architecture at the University of Virginia, Hill instead chose to study under Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin. Hill arrived at Spring Green, Wisconsin, on 17 June 1938; he was eighteen years old and had just graduated from high school. He studied engineering, drafting, composition, and interior design under the senior Taliesin apprentices, and was particularly influenced by William Wesley Peters, John (Jack) Howe, and Eugene Masselink. Throughout his career, he collaborated with his Taliesin colleague and close friend Cornelia Brierly, a graduate of the Carnegie Institute of Technology. By 1941, Hill was promoted to the position of senior apprentice and paid draftsman. Though he had training in all aspects of architecture, he specialized in the design of interiors. Wright, recognizing his talent in this area, discouraged him from further training or licensure as an architect. For the next decade, Hill worked closely with Wright on at least sixty-nine

built commissions, including the Johnson Wax Administration Building and Tower, Florida Southern College (1938-53), the Price Tower (1952), and the Price Residence (1953). Hill, with Kenn Lockhart and a small group of senior apprentices, arranged the 1953 exhibition *Sixty Years of Living Architecture*, first in Mexico City, then in New York (at the future site of Wright's Guggenheim Museum). Hill also had the primary responsibility for maintenance and "decorating" at the Taliesin complex. At Taliesin – in addition to his design duties – Hill was instrumental in arranging social events and music programs (he was a talented pianist).

In 1953, at Wright's recommendation to editor-in-chief Elizabeth Gordon, Hill joined the staff of *House Beautiful* as the architectural editor; he became the executive editor in 1957. He worked with Gordon for ten years, serving both as editor and as in-house designer for many of *House Beautiful*'s exhibitions and photo stagings. With draftsman Gair Sloan, who had trained under Aaron Green in San Francisco, a decorating staff led by Laura Tanner, and numerous craftsmen on call, Hill's *House Beautiful* office produced at least a quarter of what the magazine photographed and published between 1953 and his departure in 1963. Hill was Gordon's "right hand man," and the two became lifelong friends.

One of Hill's greatest endeavors was *House Beautiful*'s Arts of Daily Living Exhibition for the Los Angeles County Fair in 1954. He designed this twenty-two room exhibit, with small contributions from Alfred Browning Parker, Henry Eggers, and the Hawaiian architect Albert Ely. The exhibit illustrated good design in common

environments, and showcased *House Beautiful*'s preference for organic architecture. The Exhibit was dedicated to Hill's mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright. In the following years, Hill and Gordon formed an alliance between several manufacturers and Wright, and helped to establish Wright's line of Schumacher fabrics and Martin-Seynour paints. By 1956, Gordon and Hill had formed a freelance design firm, Joël Design Projects Company. Under Joël, with Hill assuming the name Hayes Alexander, they produced a line of fabrics for Schumacher, interiors for Wright's Tonkens House in Cincinnati, and a line of furnishings for Heritage Henredon.

When Wright died in 1959, Hill considered leaving *House Beautiful* to return to Taliesin; his Taliesin colleagues William Wesley Peters and Eugene Masselink encouraged him to stay as the public "voice" of organic architecture. He remained at *House Beautiful* for three more years, until the sudden death of Masselink in 1962. Hill resigned, though the Hearst Corporation forced him to stay to fulfill his contract until October 1963.

Hill returned to Taliesin in the fall of 1963 to assume the role of secretary and director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. In this position, he oversaw the seasonal openings and closings of Taliesin, cared for the Wright's art collection, and resumed his role as decorator of the Taliesin interiors (domestic and studio space). In the 1960s and 1979, he worked with Peters and Cornelia Brierly on several projects in Iran. He was instrumental in guiding the restoration work at Taliesin, and was particularly concerned with returning elements that had been removed after Wright's death. Along with his

Taliesin colleagues Dick Carney and Bruce Brooks Pfieffer, Hill managed the Wright Decorative Designs Collection, including reproductions by Cassina, Schumacher, and Tiffany. Hill retired in 1989, but continued as an advisor and director emeritus until his death in June 1996.

**Major works, independent (selected)**

"Arts of Daily Living" Exhibition, Los Angeles County Fair, 1954

United States Rubber Exhibit Hall, Rockefeller Center, New York, 1957

J. Ralph Corbett House, *House Beautiful* Pace Setter 1960, Cincinnati, 1959-60

Pace Setter Fabrics for Schumacher, 1960

Pace Setter Furniture Line, Heritage Henredon, 1960

**Major works with Frank Lloyd Wright (selected)**:

*Drafting, Supervision or Construction*

Johnson Wax Administration Building and Tower,

Taliesin West, 1938-53

Suntop Homes, 1938

Florida Southern College, 1938-53

Auld Brass, 1939

Pope Residence, 1939

Sturgis Residence, 1939

Pew Residence, 1939

Jacobs House II, 1943

Walter House, 1945-48

Friedman House, 1945

Unitarian Church, 1947

Alsop House, 1948

Hughes House, 1948

Laurent House, 1949

Neils House, 1951

Hoffman House, 1955-58

**Interiors for Wright:**

Lloyd Lewis Residence, 1939

Wall Residence, 1941

Jacobs House II, 1943

Walter House, 1945-48

Friedman House, 1945

MM Smith Residence, 1946 + addition

Unitarian Church, 1947

Mossberg Residence, 1948

Hughes Residence, 1948

Alsop Residence, 1948

VC Morris Gift Shop, 1948

Laurent House, 1949

Neils House, 1951

D. Wright Residence, 1950

Price Building, Offices, 1952

Riverview Terrace Restaurant, 1953

[With Wright, supervised from New York]

*Sixty Years of Living Architecture*, Guggenheim Exhibit, New York, 1953

Tonkens House, 1954

Hoffman Showroom, 1955-58

Plaza Apartment, 1954

Hoffman House, 1955-58

Isabell Roberts / Scott Remodel, 1955

[After Wright's death]

Marin County Civic Center, 1964

Boswell Residence, 1970

Stromguist Residence, 1990

Grady Gammage Auditorium, 1963

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Hill's papers, including personal correspondence, are held at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives. Scattered correspondence is also spread between the Curtis Besinger Collection (University of Kansas Libraries), and the Alfred Browning Parker Papers (University of Florida, Gainesville). The Maynard Parker Collection at the Huntington Library is a particularly rich source for images of Hill's Arts of Daily Living Exhibition in Los Angeles, 1954. The Ezra Stoller Archives contain a few images of Hill's interior remodeling of his own New York apartment, and may contain images of the Pace Setter House of 1960. The majority of the biographical information for this dissertation was compiled from oral histories, and Hill's papers. Hill appears in many of the Taliesin recollections, particularly in the writings of Cornelia Brierly. Some of his drawing are intact at the Taliesin Archives, though the Pace Setter House for 1960 was not among them. Though Hill wrote a great deal for *House Beautiful* between 1953 and 1963, like many of the editorial staff including Elizabeth Gordon, he rarely was credited in the byline. As a result, the "by Hill" portion of the following bibliography does not accurately represent his contribution to the magazine. Authorship can only be assumed, and I have not chosen to attribute any essays to Hill directly unless substantial evidence existed within his archives.

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"Magnifying a small city lot into a private Paradise." *House Beautiful* 98 (April 1956): 119-122, 125-129.

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**About Hill (chronological)**

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Gordon, Elizabeth. "A kitchen for people who make an Art of Cooking." *House Beautiful* 97 no 1 (Jan 1955): 44.

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"A Dwelling Place that is a complete Work of Art." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960): 90-95.

"A Proper Place to Inspire the Art of Cooking." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960): 130-43, 158.

"A well-designed house has an inevitable sense of rightness in relation to its environment." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960): 96-99, 176.

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"It is Poetic in Idea and Form." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960):126-27, 152.

"One Room with Many Moods." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960):128-129.

"Planned for the Enhancement of Living." *House Beautiful* 102 (Feb 1960):114-17, 177.

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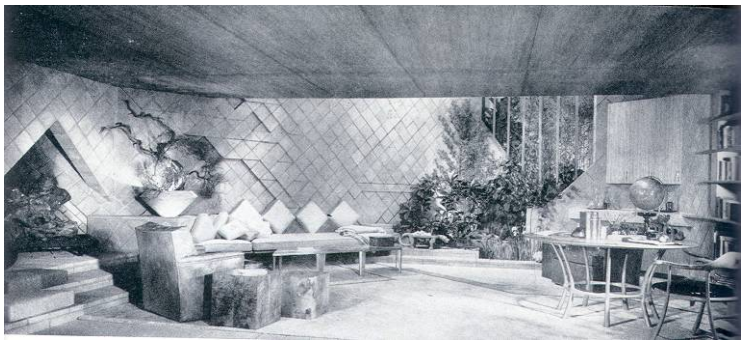

"Arts of Daily Living" Exhibition, Los Angeles County Fair, 1954

United States Rubber Exhibit Hall, Rockefeller Center, New York, 1957

**Cliff May**

(1908 - 1989)

Clifford M. May, a sixth generation Californian, was born in San Diego, California on 29 August 1908, to Charles Clifford May and Beatrice A. Magee May. The May family, which included a younger son Henry, spent their time between their small bungalow in San Diego, and the Magee family ranch (Santa Margarita y Las Flores) in northern San Diego County. In 1932, May married his first wife Jean A. Litchy, with whom he had three daughters (Marilyn, Hilary, and Melanie) and one son (Michael). May and Jean divorced in 1966, after which May married his second wife Lisa, who was from Burma.

May graduated from San Diego High School, and from 1929 to 1931, attended San Diego State College (SDSC). Though May had planned to pursue a career as a jazz musician (he played the bugle, the saxophone and the piano), he took business courses – banking and economics – but withdrew without a degree. He began his training as a furniture maker and as a builder, but received no formal architectural education. He was never licensed as an architect, and identified himself as a "building designer" and contractor who learned his trade through practice. May was, however, eventually granted a builder-designer's license in the State of California through a "grandfather clause."

May first began to build houses in 1932 with Roy C. Litchy (his father-in-law), a real estate developer in San Diego. Over the next five years, May collaborated with Litchy, and other San Diego developers such as O.U. Miracle and George A. Marston.

With these men, May constructed over fifty homes in a five-year period. In 1937, May moved to Los Angeles, and started a lucrative partnership with John A. Smith, an oil industrialist, banker, and owner of First National Finance Corporation of Los Angeles. With Smith's financial backing, May began to develop large-scale tracts of ranch houses around Los Angeles, including Riviera Ranch in Brentwood (west Los Angeles), Sullivan Canyon Ranch (west Los Angeles), and Woodacres (Santa Monica).

The majority of May's design work prior to 1953 was for a middle and upper middle-class clientele. Some of his better known homes were the Frederic Blow House (Los Angeles), the John A. Smith House (La Habra), and the K.S. "Boots" Adams (Bartlesville, Oklahoma). May designed and built five homes for himself. The best known are the Cliff May #2 in Mandeville Canyon (1937-38), also published as the Ranch House Classic and as the prologue to *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter House Program; Cliff May #4, the "Skylight House" (1949); and Cliff May #5, Mandalay (Los Angeles, 1952-56). In 1952, with partner Christopher Choate, May began to explore a low-cost version of the California Ranch House. In 1953, they exhibited and published their prefabricated prototype built of a panel system as the "Magic Money House." This house served as the model for hundreds of homes in May-Choate subdivisions completed throughout the 1950s. Most were constructed under the business name of Cliff May Homes, established in 1954, which sold plans and materials to developers and dealers across the United States. Among May's notable non-residential works are the Mondavi

Winery and Offices, Napa; the *Sunset Magazine* and Book Buildings, Menlo Park; the Saga Office Complex, Menlo Park; and the Hotel Cabo San Lucas, Baja California.

Between 1945 and 1946, May served as the President of the Los Angeles Division of Building Contractors Association, of which he was the director between 1940 and 1950. May was also the construction consultant for *House Beautiful* between 1946 and 1952. In 1974, May became a member of the Board of Directors for the University of Southern California Architectural Guild; he served until 1976.

May won many awards throughout his career, including the 1947, 1952 and 1953 award from the National Association of Home Builders; the Award of Merit for Residential Design and Construction from *House and Home* in 1956; the Hallmark House Award from *House and Garden* in 1958; and the Builder of the Year Award from Congress of Building Contractors Association of California in 1963. His homes were exhibited by *House Beautiful* as the Pace Setter for 1948, and by *Better Homes and Gardens* at the Avenue of American Homes for the Chicago Lake Front Fair in 1950.

May was known as a designer who espoused a modern lifestyle, and has often been credited as the father of the Western Ranch House. He was known for the development and spread of the rambling postwar ranch house, as well as his innovations in floor and wall systems, and his experiments with prefabricated construction with partner Christopher Choate.

**Major Works (selected)**

Cliff May #2, Ranch House Classic, 1937-38

*House Beautiful* Pace Setter for 1948, 1945-47

Cliff May #4, the "Skylight House," Los Angeles, 1949

Cliff May #5, "Mandalay," Los Angeles, 1952-56

KS "Boots" Adams, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Mondavi Winery and Offices, Napa, California.

Sunset Magazine and Book Buildings, Menlo Park, California.

Saga Office Complex, Menlo Park, California.

Hotel Cabo San Lucas, Baja, California.

**CLIFF MAY HOMES, Subdivisions (chronological)**

**Partial list of CLIFF MAY HOMES 1952-1955 courtesy of David Bricker, "Built For Sale" (Master's Thesis: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1983).*

1940 Riviera Ranch, Brentwood

1943 Woodacres, Santa Monica

1946 Sullivan Canyon Ranch, West Los Angeles

1952 Stern and Price, Cupertino (approx. 375 homes)

1953 Rancho Lindo, Chico (100 homes)

1953 Rancho Benicia, Vista (169 homes)

1953 Newark (40 homes)

1953 San Mateo, Myers Brothers (1500 homes)

1954 Lakewood Rancho Estates, Lakewood (800 homes)

1954 Rancho Vallejo, Vallejo (131 homes)

1954 Glendora (40 homes)

1954 Roseville

1954 Rancho Park, West Covina

1954 Valencia Terrace, Anaheim

1954 Charleston Heights, Las Vegas Nevada (102 homes)

1954 Fairway at Lakewood, Tacoma Washington

1954 Thunderbird Estates, Seattle Washington

1955 Park View Homes, Garden Groves (35 homes)

1955 Holstein Developments, Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Tustin (467 homes)

1955 Brookhurst Plaza, Anaheim

1955 Sun Estates, Anaheim

1955 Westmont Estates, Pomona

1955 Casa View Oaks, Dallas Texas

1955 Harvey Park, Denver (700 homes)

1955 Avondale Gardens, West Memphis, Arkansas

1955 Cherokee Village, Hardy Arkansas

1955 Evergreen Village, Flint Michigan

1955 Hillcrest Homes, Logan Utah

1955 Maywood Hills, Salt Lake City, Utah

**Bibliographic Note**

Though Cliff May is briefly referenced in a number of surveys of architectural history (see Doordan, *Twentieth-Century Architecture*; and Hess, *Ranch Houses* in particular), no major monographic treatment exists. Cliff May's papers and a small collection of his extant drawings and plans yielded a great deal of information for this project, and are held at the Cliff May Collection, University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), Architecture Design Collection. At this writing, the May Collection remained uncatalogued and only partially accessible. The most comprehensive source of biographical information on May is Cliff May and Marlene Laskey, *The California Ranch House: Oral History Transcript* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984). David Bricker's "Cliff May and the Low Cost California Ranch House," (Master's Thesis: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1983) provided an excellent source of further information, as Bricker had the opportunity to interview May in his office before his death, and was involved with an unfinished attempt by Professor David Gebhard to catalog May's works. The architectural photographer Maynard Parker had a long friendship with May, and photographed much of his work. For a good selection of these images, particularly homes published in *House Beautiful*, see the Maynard Parker Collection at the Huntington Research Library. May did not produce much theoretical material, but his philosophy of design is clearly laid out

in *Sunset Western Ranch Houses* (alternate title: *Ranch Houses*. San Francisco: Lane Publishing Co., 1946). In the 1958 edition of this book, May showed a growing allegiance to the ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright, whose works he had read and whom he had visited in 1942. May and Wright exchanged a few pieces of correspondence; for a listing of these, see Anthony Alofsin, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: An Index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, (New York: Garland Pub., 1988).

The following bibliography has been compiled through my limited access of clippings in the Cliff May Collection, and through my extensive cataloging of *House Beautiful* publications. I have also utilized the *Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature*, the *Los Angeles Times* Index, the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, and other bibliographic search engines. Cliff May's office prepared a partial bibliography, which has been indispensable reference; it is available through the Cliff May Collection (UCSB). Bricker's "Cliff May and the Low Cost California Ranch House" provided a tremendous amount of bibliographic information, and a useful account of May's "Magic Money House."

**Abbreviations**

*AA* *Arts & Architecture*

*AD* *Architectural Digest*

*AF* *Architectural Forum*

*AH* *The American Home*

*AR* *Architectural Record*

*BHG* *Better Homes & Gardens*

*CAA* *California Arts & Architecture*

*GH* *Good Housekeeping*

*HG* *House & Garden*

*HH* *House & Home*

*LAT* *Los Angeles Times*

*SM* *Sunset Magazine*

*WB* *Western Building*

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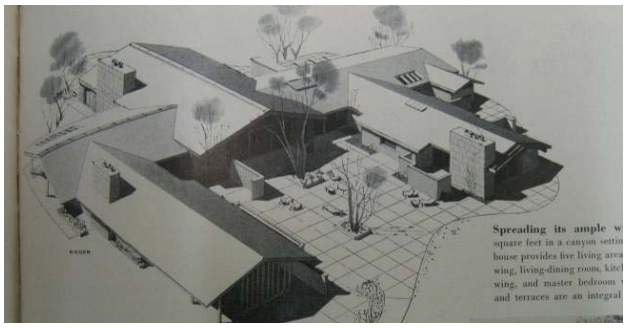

Cliff May #5, Mandalay, Los Angeles

**Vladimir Ossipoff**

(1907-1998)

Vladimir Nicholas Ossipoff was born in Vladivostok, Russia on 25 November 1907. From age ten, he was raised in Tokyo, where his father was posted as a military attaché for the Imperial Army at the Russian embassy. Ossipoff's early years were marked by a varied cultural experience: he traveled frequently between Japan and Petrograd, and attended St. Joseph's College in Tokyo, where instruction was in English. He later attended the Tokyo Foreign School (or, the American School). He learned to speak Japanese from a Japanese nanny, and spent his summers at the family retreat near Mount Fuji. In 1923, as the Kanto Earthquake devastated Tokyo, the Ossipoff family fled to the United States. The family settled in Berkeley, California (Ossipoff's father had died in an accident in the meantime). Ossipoff graduated from a Berkeley high school in 1926, and received his Bachelor's in Architecture from the University of California in 1931. In 1930, he worked briefly as a draftsman for Los Angeles architect Theo Jacobs before taking a job with the San Francisco firm of Crim, Resing and McGinnis. In 1932, Ossipoff moved to Hawaii (at the urging of his former high school classmate and college roommate Douglas Slaten), where he worked for the noted architects Charles W, Dickey (1932-33), and as the Head Designer in the Home Building Department of Theo H. Davies & Co. He held that position between 1933 and 1935. In 1936, Ossipoff established his own firm, Vladimir Ossipoff, AIA. His practice was interrupted briefly by World War II, when he worked as a Navy Project Engineer at the Pacific Naval Air Base

in Pearl Harbor. After the war, he was able to resume a productive career. By 1961, he teamed with several other architects to become Vladimir Ossipoff & Associates, with offices in Honolulu. The firm continues today, in the same location, under the name Ossipoff, Snyder and Rowland Architects with Sidney E. Snyder Jr. AIA, as the principal.

Ossipoff enjoyed a successful practice, and completed over 1000 buildings in his sixty-year career. He was commissioned to design custom homes, residential tracts, condominiums, educational facilities, banking houses, corporate offices, religious buildings and airport terminals. His most notable residential commissions include the Liljestrand House (*House Beautiful* Pace Setter for 1958), a residence for Clare Boothe Luce; his award-winning home for Linus Pauling Jr., the son of the Nobel-prize winning chemist; the Pacific Outrigger Canoe Club; the Thurston Memorial Chapel at Punahou Schools; and the IBM Building.

Over the course of his career, Ossipoff's work was published widely, both in Hawaii and in the mainland architectural press. He was an occasional lecturer and visiting critic at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He received a number of prestigious awards, including the first medal of honor of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the AIA Grand Award in 1958-59 for the design of his own home and for the McInerny Store in Waikiki.

As his client Linus Pauling, Jr., later recalled, Ossipoff was known for his gruff, straightforward and outspoken manner, as well as for his culinary skills. Ossipoff married

Raelyn Ossipoff, and they had two daughters, Alexandra and Valerie. Ossipoff was a member of the AIA, and was elected a Fellow in 1956. He died in on 1 October 1998 in Honolulu.

**Major Works (selected)**

Administration Building, University of Honolulu, 1948 (with Fisk, Johnson & Preis)

Hawaiian Life Building, 1951, with Wayne F. Owens

Wherry Act Houses, 1951, with Fisk, Johnson, Perkins & Preis

Liberty Bank, 1952 , with Associate Wayne F. Owens

Punahou Elementary School, 1948, with additions in 1954

Liljestrand House, *House Beautiful* Pace Setter 1958, completed in 1952

The Queen's Hospital Surgery Wing, 1955 with Wayne F. Owens

Linus Pauling Jr., Round Top House, 1956

Gymnasium, Palama Settlement, 1958

American Mutual Life Building, 1959

Queen's Hospital Addition, 1960

The Pacific Club, 1960, Association architects Merrill, Sims & Roehrig & Seckel

IBM Building, Honolulu, 1962

Robert Thurston Memorial Chapel, Punahou School, 1967

Hawaii Prep Academy, Kamuela, 1968

Clare Booth Luce Residence, Honolulu, (Kahala), 1969

Ossipoff House, (AIA award 1959)

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"Residence on a windy hilltop in Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii." *Architectural Record* 118 (Sept 1955):197-201.

"M.M. Goodsill House, Honolulu, Hawaii." *Architectural Record* 117 (May 1955):161-163.

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*House Beautiful* Pace Setter Issue, July 1958

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"How one good thing leads to others." *House Beautiful* 100 (Jul 1958): 52-55.

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**Vladimir Ossipoff, Illustrations of Selected Works**

Kahala Residence

**Alfred Browning Parker**

(b. 1916)

Alfred Browning Parker was born on 24 September 1916 in Boston, the only child of James and Jewel Fry Parker. James, a native Georgian and realtor by profession, and his wife Jewel, who was from Natchitoches, Louisiana, moved with Alfred to Florida in 1924 in hopes of healing his recurring respiratory ailments. As a young man, Parker was accomplished athlete and good student. He attended public school in Miami, and graduated from Miami High School in 1934. He entered the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Florida at Gainesville in the fall of 1934, where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Architecture (with honors) in May 1939. His cohort consisted of only four students, yet Parker was able to participate in a number of university-wide activities, including the Phi Eta Sigma scholastic fraternity, the Gargoyle honorary architectural fraternity, the Beta Theta Pi social fraternity where he held five offices including president. After his graduation in 1939, he won an exchange scholarship to the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, where he studied philosophy of design and structural engineering. In Stockholm, he lived with a Swedish family as an exchange scholar and studied under Swedish designer Paul Hedquist. After only four months, World War II interrupted his graduate studies. Jailed on suspicions of espionage (police had observed him photographing key Swedish government buildings), and released only after the intervention of the United States Secretary of State and the Swedish

Ambassador, Parker left Scandinavia on the one of the last ships scheduled to the United States.

Upon his return in late 1939, Rudolph Weaver, director of the University of Florida's School of Architecture, offered Parker a post as an Associate Professor. HE taught in Gainesville until 1946. His courses included design, structures, materials and methods of construction, history of architecture, freehand drawing, and photography. In 1940-41, Parker received a Pan American Airways Fellowship that allowed eight months of travel and study in Mexico. He traveled extensively, visiting the Maya ruins at Chichen Itza and Uxmal, and the cities of Puebla, Oaxaca, Cuernavaca. In Mexico City, he attended lectures at the School of Architecture at the National University of Mexico.

In March 1942, Parker joined the United States Naval Reserves as an intelligence officer. He was assigned to short duty in Miami through 1946. During this time, he built his first home for himself, and was licensed as an architect in the state of Florida (June 1945). Though he was personally invited by Frank Lloyd Wright to study architecture at Taliesin, Parker declined the offer and opened his first architectural practice in Coconut Grove on 1 January 1946. Though he has been widely recognized for his residential designs, such as his three *House Beautiful* Pace Setter Houses, and his home Woodsong (Coconut Grove, 1970), Parker produced a number of notable commercial and religious buildings, including Miamarina (Miami, 1970), and Temple Beth-El (West Palm Beach, 1971).

Throughout his long career, Parker has been recognized by many awards including selection as a *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter architect (four times), numerous regional AIA awards and Florida Architecture awards. He was active in the AIA, and served on various committees. In addition to maintaining a productive practice, Parker still continues to teach at the University of Florida at Gainesville. He is currently finishing yet another home for himself and his wife in Gainesville.

Parker married Martha Gifford in 1942, and had five children: Derek, Gifford (Bebe), Robin Zachary, Jules Graham, and Quentin. They divorced in 1956. In 1959, he married Jane Britt, and their daughter LeBrittia was born in 1960. He currently lives in Gainesville with his wife Euphrosyne Nittis Parker. Parker is a member of the AIA, and was elected as a Fellow in 1959. He was instrumental in electing his close friend of Elizabeth Gordon as an Honorary Member of the AIA.

**Selected Works (alphabetical)**

Abelove Residence, Coral Gables, FL

Alliance Machine Company, Coconut Grove, FL, 1957

Alspach Residence, Miami, FL, 1959

Bal Harbour Yacht Club, Bal Harbour, FL, 1954

Bazaar International & Trylon Tower, Riviera Beach, FL, 1959

Belin Bay Tower, Miami, FL, project

Caudle Residence, Cincinnati, OH

Cohen Residence, West Palm Beach, FL

Concrete Masonry Assoc  Pavilion, Miami, FL, 1973

Crane Residence, Marathon Shores, FL

Epstein Residence, Biscayne Bay, FL

Ewing Residence, Coconut Grove, FL

Farmer Residence, Miami Springs, FL, project

Flagler First Federal Branch, Miami, FL, 1976

Flagler First Federal Branch, Miami, FL, 1960

Flagler First Federal Branch, FL, 1972

Floyd Residence, Ann Arbor, MI, 1967

Fort Lauderdale Tower, Fort Lauderdale, FL, project

Friedman Residence (mini-Pace Setter 1956), Miami

Galt Ocean Mile Theater, Fort Lauderdale, FL, project

Garza Residence, Mexico, project

Gayer Residence, Coconut Grove, FL, 1953

General Capitol Corp (Miami Times), Miami, FL, 1970

Graham Residence, Andros Islands, Bahamas, project

Groves Residence, Grand Bahama Island, Freeport, Bahamas

Haight Residence, Bedford, NY, project

Hogarth Residence

Hope Lutheran Church, Miami, FL, 1963

Hopwood Residence, Coconut Grove, FL

Jewell Parker Residence, Coconut Grove, FL

Johnson Residence, Racine, WI, 1968-73

Kitchens Residence, Dade Co, FL

Knight Farm, Ocala, FL, project

Kohler Residence, Calistoga, CA, project

Landon Residence, Coral Gables, FL, 1965-66

Leopold Residence, Ladue, MO, project

Litsey Residence, South Miami, FL

Manguson Residence (Wallace Residence), Coral Gables, FL, 1965

Manus Residence, Palm Beach, FL

Marble Works Powerhouse Restaurant, VT, project

Mass Residence, Palm Beach, FL, 1957

Miamarina, Miami, FL, 1970

Miller Residence (Pacesetter 1959), Coconut Grove, FL, 1959

Parker Office, Coral Gables, FL, 1968

Parker Residence '43, Coral Gables, FL

Parker Residence '45 (6 week wonder), Gainesville, FL

Parker Residence '53 (Pacesetter 1954), Coral Gables, FL

Parker Residence '64 (Pacesetter 1965), Coral Gables, FL

Parker Residence Rocks &Pines, FL

Parker Residence, “Windsong,” VT

Parker Residence, “Woodsong,” Coconut Grove, FL, 1971

Popular Mechanics atrium house, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, 1962

Stettin Residence, Dade Co, FL, 1983-85

Strauss Residence, Key Biscayne, FL, project

Streate Residence, Miami, FL

Swayze Residence, Isle St. Martin, project

Temple Beth El, West Palm Beach, FL, 1971

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Parker’s extensive archives are held at the University of Florida at Gainesville. Much of the material for this dissertation and this biographical appendix came directly from Parker’s Papers, as well as from the personal collection of Randolph Henning, Parker’s biographer (monograph forthcoming). Parker provided numerous interviews, and arranged personal tours of many of his Gainesville and Miami houses. Most of Parker’s work was photographed exclusively by Ezra Stoller, and the Stoller Archives are the best source for this visual material. Parker published a great deal in the 1950s and 1960s, and *House Beautiful* was a major supporter of his work. After Elizabeth Gordon retired in 1965, Parker was hesitant to publish in other periodicals.

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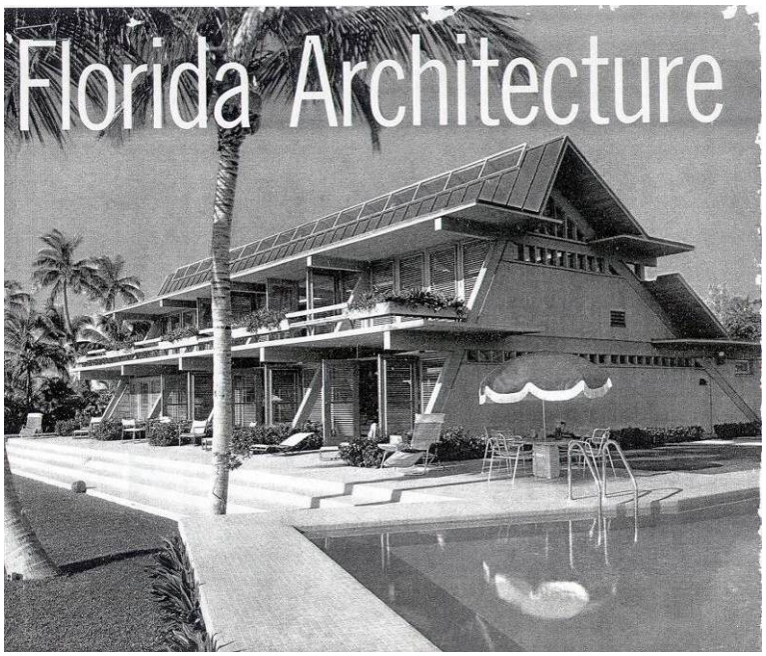


Mass House (demolished)

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Parker Residence, Woodsong


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Temple Beth-El

**Roger Rasbach**

(1928-2003)

Roger Duane Rasbach was born on May 13, 1928, in Pasadena, California. He was the son of Ruth Marie Luke Rasbach and the famed composer Oscar Rasbach. His mother, Ruth Luke, born in 1899, grew up on a self-sufficient Washington farmstead with no electricity, gas, water, inside plumbing or telephone. They raised their own food, kept dairy animals, and ran an orchard. His mother's rural western upbringing inspired many of Rasbach's later ideas about independence and self-sufficiency, and reduction of waste, all of which translated into his architecture. Oscar Rasbach, a composer and concert pianist, was born in Germany and trained in Vienna. He immigrated to Los Angeles at an early age. Rasbach father's possessed a great love for nature and for the preservation of the environment. The elder Rasbach was adamant in his beliefs: he built his first music studio around a tree to avoid cutting it down; and his numerous musical compositions were based on poems inspired by nature, including his most famous composition that set Joyce Kilmer's poem *Trees* to music. From a young age, Rasbach was influenced by his father's reverence for nature. In the 1930s, the Rasbach family lived in Pasadena, in an architect-designed "Florentine villa." Their house was historicist stylistically, but technologically modern: it featured in-room heat controls, retracting electric window screens, and the first all-electric kitchen in Pasadena.

Rasbach received no formal architectural education; he began his career as a designer with training in the building industry. His first homes were derivatives of the

California ranch house, and were constructed for young middle-income families. In the late 1940s, he began to experiment with passive solar features, including reflective tile roofs. He published two books that expressed his philosophy of energy conservation and self-reliant architecture, *The Provident Planner* (1976) and *The Provident Home* (1993).

Rasbach had a varied career, in which he designed homes for Henry Kaiser in Honolulu, for Houston Mayor Louie Welch, and numerous commercial clients. Rasbach counted among his friends and supporters Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and Ima Hogg. His based his practice, Rasbach Roger Associates, in Houston; the firm was in existence for nearly half of a century. In the 1950s, he pioneered climate studies with Texas A&M, and produced the "Solar House," published in *House Beautiful* in 1952 as a good example of passive solar technology. The Solar House was also promoted as the first built-for-sale air conditioned house. Throughout his career, Rasbach was dedicated to developing affordable, environmentally friendly homes, and was known for early work in passive solar technology, energy conservation, and in the 1970s and 1980s, the use of computer-aided design of prefabricated construction components. This method employed prefabricated structural insulated panels that eliminated the need for conventional insulation methods. To construct these panels, Rasbach opened the Rasbach Panel Plant in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Rasbach married Jane Phillips, with whom he had twin sons, Roger D. Rasbach Jr. and Oscar P. Rasbach, both of Houston; and a daughter, Charlene Rasbach Hastings. Rasbach died on 30 July 2003.

**Major Works (selected)**

**Rasbach did not provide design or construction dates for most of his homes; if they were not published, the date has been omitted.*

**Residential Designs**

Halff House, *House Beautiful* Pace Setter 1961, San Antonio, 1960-61

*House and Garden*'s Hallmark House, 1961

Raintree Home, ca 1973

Solar Assisted House, 1977

*House Beautiful*'s American Beauty Home

*House and Garden* House of Ideas, The First Co-Generation Home

Norfleet Turner House, Memphis

Fogel House, San Antonio

Avant Home, San Antonio

The Ponder Home, El Paso

The Marion Nordan Harwell / Arthur Seeligson, Jr. Residence, San Antonio

Langham Home, River Oaks, Houston

Retama Polo Farm, San Antonio

Jim Jones Home, "Villa Jardin," McAllen, Texas

Shannon Home, Fort Worth

David Carruth Home, Dallas

Tobin Home, San Antonio

Roy Home, Nashville

The Dominion Home, San Antonio

Max Hulse House, San Angelo

Raintree Home, Houston

Roger Rasbach Home, “The Woodlands Home,” Woodlands, Houston

**Commercial Designs (selected)**

Argyle Club, San Antonio

Retand Polo Club, San Antonio

Country Lane Patio Home Development, San Antonio

Tesoro Petroleum Headquarters, 1968, San Antonio

Dallas cowboys Training Camp, master design, San Antonio

Hawkeye Hunting Club, cottages and conference facility, Center, Texas, San Antonio

Raintree Townhome Estates, San Antonio

**Bibliographic note**

No major archives have been created for Rasbach, who died in 2003. His firm, Rasbach & Associates was recently dissolved. The best source of biographical information, insight

on his philosophy of design and construction, and an account of his practice are available in his book *The Provident Home* (1993).

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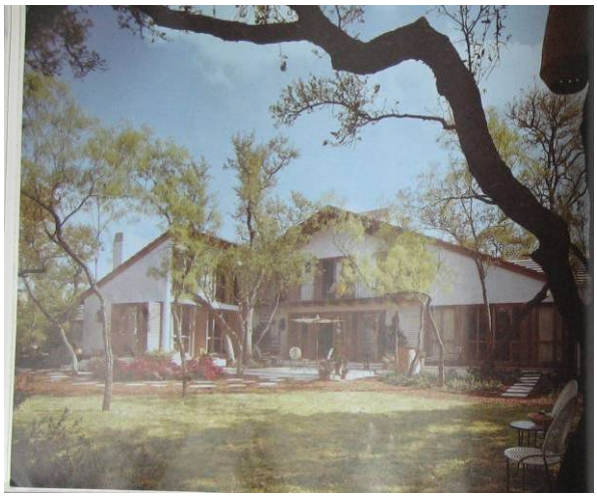
**Roger Rasbach, Illustrations of Selected Works**



Rasbach Residence "Country Lane," 1960

The Ponder House, House Beautiful Climate Control House, El Paso

**Emil A. Schmidlin**

(1906-1988)

Emil Achilles Schmidlin was born in Basle, Switzerland on 10 September 1906. After immigrating to the United States, he attended Columbia University from 1923 to 1927, and studied architecture at the Beaux-Arts Institute of New York from 1928 to 1932. While still an undergraduate, Schmidlin worked as a draftsman and designer for the New Jersey architect Robert J.L. Cadien (the former president of the New Jersey AIA, 1947-49). Upon his graduation from Columbia, Schmidlin found employment with Eugene A. MacMurray. At the completion of his architectural studies in 1932, he entered into partnership in MacMurray's firm, which was renamed MacMurray & Schmidlin. In 1944, Schmidlin established his own practice in East Orange, New Jersey, where he lived and practiced for nearly five decades. In the late 1940s, Schmidlin worked in association with Ellis Leigh, with whom he designed *House Beautiful*'s Pace Setter for 1949.

Schmidlin had an interest in education and public service; he lectured for one year at Columbia University (1951-52), and occasionally at Syracuse University. He was actively involved with design in his home community, and served on the New Providence Zoning Commission in New Providence from 1940 to 1947, and the Orange Zoning Commission, in Orange New Jersey from 1950 to 1955. He was later an advisor and consultant for the Planning Board of East Orange. In 1955, Schmidlin was the consulting architect for the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. Over his long career, Schmidlin received several awards of recognition, including his selection as a Pace Setter architect,

first prize from the National Homebuilders Association in 1950 for Dryden Gardens, second prize from *Progressive Architecture* in 1953 for Hillside Civic Center, and in 1953, he was awarded first prize from the New Jersey AIA for his design for the Brookside School in New Jersey.

One of Schmidlin's most innovative designs was the Formica House, at the Formica Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. Sponsored by the Formica Corporation of Cincinnati, this was intended as a model unit to be sold in six variations for between $25,000 and $45,000. This was the first home to be clad in Formica laminate. Schmidlin used Formica throughout the model home, from countertops, to walls, to furnishings.

Schmidlin was a member of the AIA. He died of heart failure in 1988.

**Major Works (selected)**

**Residential**

*House Beautiful* Pace Setter 1949, Orange, New Jersey, 1948-49

Dryden Gardens, East Orange, New Jersey, 1949

Sanford Kalb Residence, Passaic, New Jersey, 1954; with Ellis Leigh

Ned Feldman Residence, Englewood, New Jersey, ca. 1954

Morris Schwartz Residence, Short Hills, New Jersey, ca. 1954

Joseph Lieberman Residence, Short Hills, New Jersey, ca. 1954; with Ellis Leigh

Martin P. Rubin Residence, Deal, New Jersey, ca. 1958.

**Commercial, Institutional, and Civic**

Stockton School, East Orange, 1953

State Teachers College, Montclair, 1955

YMCA, Newark, 1955

Civic Center, Hillside, 1955

Liberty Mutual, 240 S. Harrison St., East Orange, New Jersey, ca. 1956

Montclair State College, Student Life Building, Montclair NJ, ca 1958 – 1959

East Orange High School, 1958

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New Jersey Bell Telephone Company, 1960

Clifton School, 1961

Kent Place School, 1961

Dixon Research and Chemical Company Building, Summit, New Jersey, 1961

East Orange High School, 1963

Dorm, 66 and Academy Building, Seton Hall University, 1968

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No major repository exists for Schmidlin, and very little has been written by or about him. The only source of any length deals with his design for the Formica House at the 1964 World's Fair in New York.

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**Emil Schmidlin, Illustrations of Selected Works**

Manly Courts, 1941 (MacMurray & Schmidlin)

Ned Feldman Residence, Englewood, New Jersey, ca. 1954

Liberty Mutual, 240 S. Harrison St., East Orange, New Jersey, ca. 1956

Montclair State College, Student Life Building, Montclair NJ, ca. 1958 – 1959

Montclair State College, Gymnasium, Montclair NJ, ca. 1958 – 1959

## Morgan Stedman

(1905-1978)

Born in 1905 in Brooklyn, Henry Morgan Stedman grew up in New York and Connecticut. He received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University in 1928, and later studied at Harvard. He was licensed as an architect in the states of California and Connecticut. He lived and worked for most of his career in Palo Alto, California. He partnered with Charles K. Sumner to form Sumner & Stedman. He later was a principal in Stedman, Libby & Gray. By 1954, he had formed Stedman & Williams, with Russell E. Williams. Their offices were in Palo Alto, California through at least the late 1960s. He often collaborated with his wife, the landscape architect Kathryn Peters Imlay (1901-1997). Imlay was a partner with Gertrude Knight Scott in the Palo Alto firm of Scott & Imlay and worked not only with Stedman, but with Bay Area developer Joseph Eichler. Imlay taught landscape architecture at Stanford University in the 1950s. Both Stedman and Imlay were involved with environmental conservation in the Palo Alto area, and in 1959 formed the Committee for Green Foothills (in Palo Alto/Los Altos) with the noted author Wallace Stegner. Stedman also served on the Palo Alto Planning Commission between 1947 and 1954. Stedman was a member of the AIA. He died in 1978 in Palo Alto.

**Major Works (selected)**

2281 Byron, Palo Alto, ca 1940.

2340 Cowper, Palo Alto, n.d.

Elmer Berliner house, Palo Alto, ca. 1950; landscape by Scott & Imlay

Don Clarke house, San Jose, 1948; landscape by Scott & Imlay

James Lick High School, San Jose, Santa Clara County, CA, 1950; landscape by Scott & Imlay

John Lincoln house, Los Gatos, CA, 1948; landscape by Scott & Imlay

Linda Vista School, n.d.; landscape by Scott & Imlay

E.J. Nell house, Atherton, CA, ca.1949; landscape by Scott & Imlay

**Bibliographical note**

No primary repository for Stedman has been uncovered. He often collaborated with the landscape firm of Scott & Imlay, in which his wife Kathryn Imlay was a partner; many of the project files and drawings are held in the Geraldine Knight Scott Collection at the University of California at Berkeley.

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Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0605. [at least one piece of correspondence with Stedman].

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1956

*House Beautiful* Pace Setter issue, July

" A Room for a Little Lady." *House Beautiful* 98 (July 1956): 80, 83, 106.

"After remodeling this large rambling house was ideal for a large active family." *House Beautiful* 98 (July 1956): 84-85.

"Continuity with its own Past." *House Beautiful* 98 (July 1956): 75-77.

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"Pace Setter house for 1956 showing that remodeling is often the best way to achieve the finest." *House Beautiful* 98 (July 1956): 53.

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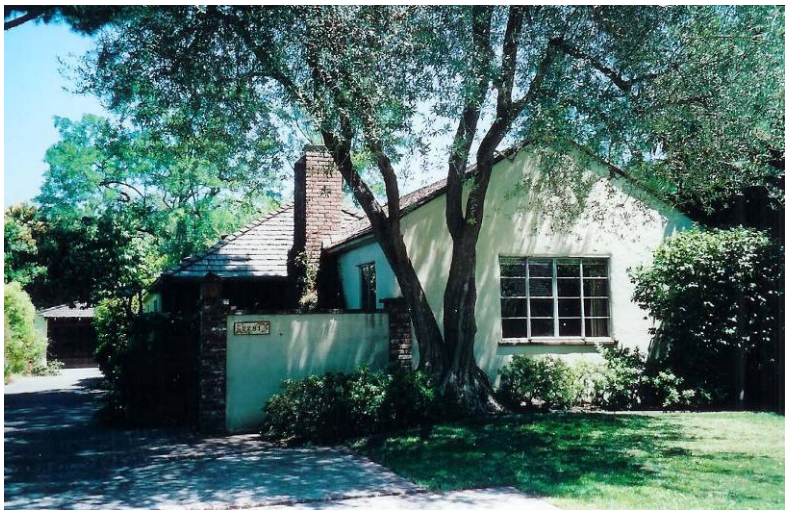
**Morgan Stedman, Illustrations of Selected Works**



2281 Byron, Palo Alto, CA

2340 Cowper, Palo Alto, CA

**Edwin A. Wadsworth**

(1908-1999)

Born in 1908 in Grand Junction, Colorado, Edwin Artemus Wadsworth moved with his family to San Diego in 1914. Wadsworth had a modest upbringing (his father Edwin was a grocer and butcher, his mother Frances was a shop clerk), and with his older sister Gwendolyn, attended public school in San Diego. By the mid-1920s, and certainly by 1930, the family had moved to Los Angeles. Wadsworth worked as a draftsman for the noted Los Angeles architecture firm of Walker & Eisen (established in 1917 by Albert R. Walker and Percy Eisen) between 1926 and 1928. Wadsworth may have worked on many of Walker & Eisen's famed Art Deco movie theaters, the Beverly Wilshire Hotel (1926), the Alexander-Oviatt Building (1927) or the El Cortex Hotel (1927), all completed while he was on staff. He went on to study architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1932. Wadsworth married his wife Anna in these years, and his only child Jane Cameron was born in 1933. Shortly after graduation, Wadsworth designed for Taylor & Taylor from 1934 to 1937. During World War II, Wadsworth served in the United States Navy, where he was charged with the design of a jet propulsion ordinance plant in Indian Head, Maryland. Following the war, he continued to serve in the United States Naval Reserve, and as the engineer of public works in Santa Barbara County, California. In 1947, Wadsworth was hired as the supervising architect for David D. Bohannon, a former defense housing builder and prominent real estate developer in the San Francisco Bay Area. With the Bohannon

Organization, Wadsworth designed the Hillside Garden Apartments (San Mateo, 1950), and *House Beautiful's* Pace Setter Houses for 1950. By 1951, Wadsworth had established his own firm in Menlo Park, just south of San Francisco. In the 1960s, Wadsworth designed custom homes, most notably in his own community of Woodside, California. He received a number of awards throughout his career, including an AIA award for a pole house in Hillsborough, an AIA award for his own home in Woodside (1961), and another for a custom design, also in Woodside (1962). His office building in Menlo Park (1300 University Drive), designed and built in 1970, won the city's award for excellent commercial design. Wadsworth was known for his pioneering use of pole framing in residential construction, an innovative structural design that required no foundations or retaining walls and was therefore ideal for sloped sites. He designed at least forty pole houses in the San Francisco Bay area. His practice included over 150 residential commissions, ten churches, and several commercial properties, all in California. He was actively involved in local architecture and planning, and served on the Santa Barbara Planning Commission (1937-42), the Architecture Review Board in Woodside Hills (director, 1963-68), the Planning Commission in Woodside (1970-?). He juried several arts competitions in Santa Barbara (1949-1954), and at least one design competition for the Western Wood Preservation Institute Design (1969). Wadsworth was a member of the AIA. He died in 1999, at the age of ninety, while vacationing in France.

**Major Works (selected, chronological)**

United States Navy Powder Plant, Indian Head, Maryland, 1945

Hillsdale Garden Apartments, San Mateo, California, 1950

*House Beautiful* Pace Setter Houses (for David D. Bohannon), San Mateo, California, 1950

San Lorenzo Shopping Center (for David D. Bohannon), Woodside, California, 1951

Rodegerdts House, Woodside, California, 1951

Woodside Road Community Church, Redwood City, California, 1954

Los Altos Country Club, Los Altos, California, 1958

Oakdale Memorial Park, Glendora, California, 1960

Carlmont Methodist Church, San Carlos, California, 1961

Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1965

Office Building, 1300 University Drive, Menlo Park, California, 1969-70

**Bibliographic Note**

Wadsworth's papers have not yet been uncovered, and the records of the David D. Bohannon Organization (now the Bohannon Development Company, San Mateo, California) do not include any material relevant to either Wadsworth or the three 1950 Pace Setter Houses. Wadsworth never published any writings, and his work received seldom mention in national architectural journals.

**About Wadsworth (selected, chronological)**

General

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*United States Census*, 1910 (Colorado); 1920 (San Diego); 1930 (Los Angeles).

1950

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"Custom House, Woodside, Calif." *House and Home* 19 (1961): 133.

1966

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"Converted war housing, San Francisco." *Architectural Forum* 10 (Oct 1943):69-75.

Mason, Joseph B. *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980*. Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1982.

*Who's Who*: "David D. Bohannon."

Germano Milono

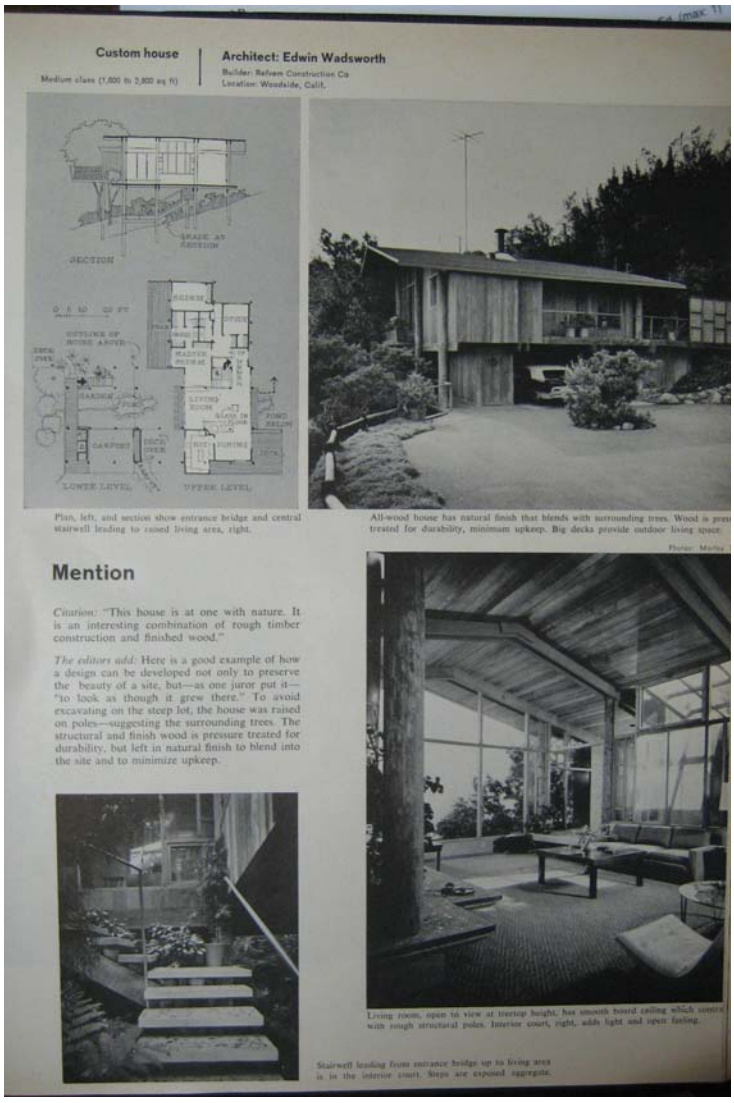
"15 AIA award-winning custom houses." *House and Home* 17 (June 1960):102-131. [Germano Milono]

"Plan for the present with your future in mind." *House Beautiful* 104 (May 1962):111-115,166.

"Here is spaciousness created by a high wide roof." *House and Home* 21 (Feb 1962):132-133. [Germano Milono]

"[Home of Mrs. Peter Kelly] Santa Rosa, California." *Western Architect and Engineer* 222 (Oct 1961):28-29.

## Edwin Wadsworth, Illustrations of Selected Works



Custom house

Architect: Edwin Wadsworth

Builder: Reform Construction Co
Location: Woodside, Calif.

Medium class (1,600 to 2,800 sq ft)

SECTION

LOWER LEVEL

UPPER LEVEL

Plan, left, and section show entrance bridge and central stairwell leading to raised living area, right.

All-wood house has natural finish that blends with surrounding trees. Wood is pres treated for durability, minimum upkeep. Big decks provide outdoor living space.

Photos: Morley

Mention

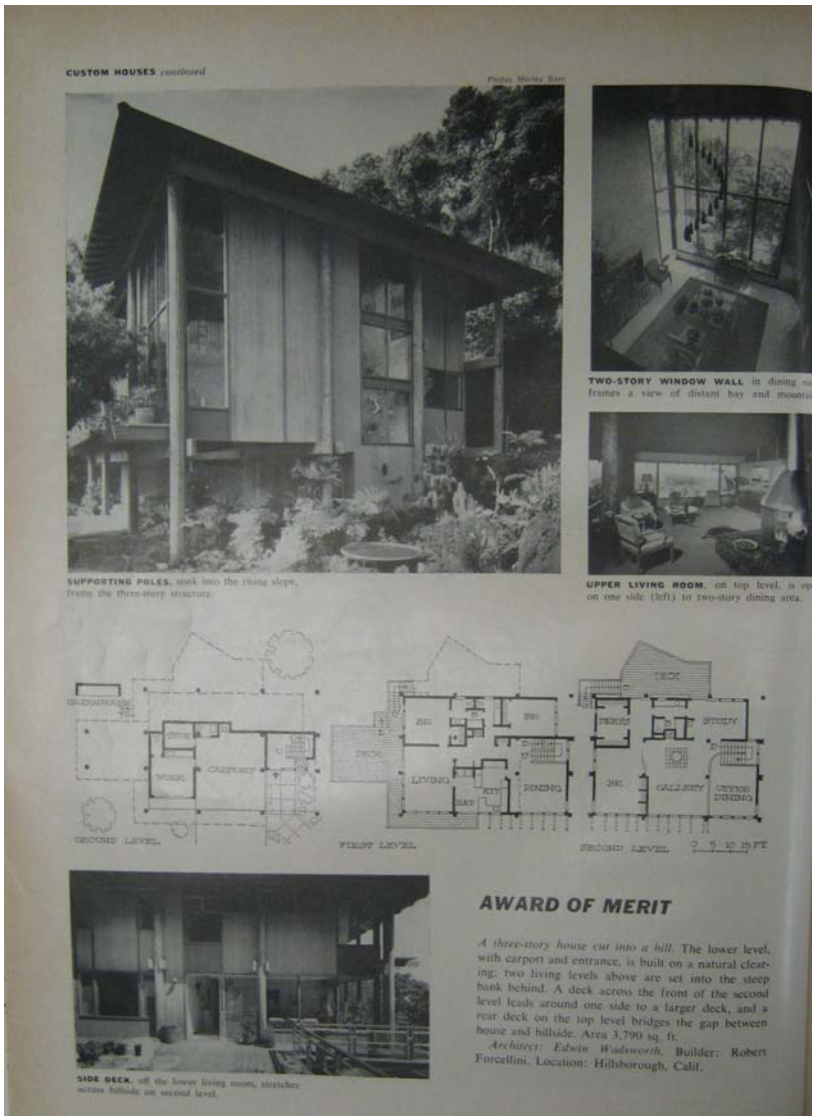
*Citation:* "This house is at one with nature. It is an interesting combination of rough timber construction and finished wood."

*The editors add:* Here is a good example of how a design can be developed not only to preserve the beauty of a site, but—as one juror put it—"to look as though it grew there." To avoid excavating on the steep lot, the house was raised on poles—suggesting the surrounding trees. The structural and finish wood is pressure treated for durability, but left in natural finish to blend into the site and to minimize upkeep.

Living room, open to view at treetop height, has smooth board ceiling which contrasts with rough structural poles. Interior court, right, adds light and open feeling.

Stairwell leading from entrance bridge up to living area is in the interior court. Steps are exposed aggregate.

Honor Award for Custom Home, Woodside, California, 1961



CUSTOM HOUSES *continued*

Photos Morley Baer

SUPPORTING POLES, sunk into the rising slope, frame the three-story structure.

TWO-STORY WINDOW WALL in dining ro frames a view of distant bay and mountai

UPPER LIVING ROOM, on top level, is op on one side (left) to two-story dining area.

GROUND LEVEL

FIRST LEVEL

SECOND LEVEL

SIDE DECK, off the lower living room, stretches across hillside on second level.

## AWARD OF MERIT

*A three-story house cut into a hill.* The lower level, with carport and entrance, is built on a natural clearing; two living levels above are set into the steep bank behind. A deck across the front of the second level leads around one side to a larger deck, and a rear deck on the top level bridges the gap between house and hillside. Area 3,790 sq. ft.

*Architect: Edwin Wadsworth.* Builder: Robert Forcellini. Location: Hillsborough, Calif.

Award of Merit, Custom Home, 1966

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